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[IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.]

HILDA'S FORTUNES.

CHAPTER XVI.

OPINIONS were divided as to who was the prettiest girl at the W— ball; some gave a verdict in favour of Evelyn, while others declared that Ida St. John, in her white gauze dress, with its bunches of scarlet berried holly, looked absolutely bewitching—as, in effect, she did.

We need hardly say to which of these two opinions Lord Dering inclined. He had been very languid and uninterested at the beginning of the evening, but he brightened wonderfully when Mrs. Morton and her daughter Myra, accompanied by Miss St. John, were announced, although, at the same time, he told himself that on no account would he ask Ida to dance.

The latter had really tried her hardest to avoid coming to the ball, but Mrs. Morton and her father had both pressed her so much that she had at last yielded a reluctant consent. She knew quite well that it would be a trial

to her, for she was aware that Arthur would be there, and it would be hard to refuse him if he asked her for a dance—harder still if he did not give her the chance of a refusal.

Ida was not at all the sort of young lady to wear her heart on her sleeve, so that all the daws that saw it might bestow on it a peck; and when she met Arthur she gave him a nonchalant little bow, as if their relations towards each other were of the most commonplace and everyday order, as the world supposed them to be.

She had no lack of partners, and she danced with such spirit and apparent enjoyment that those who watched her said,—

“What a perfect incarnation of youthful pleasure Ida St. John is!”

Besides, she was known to be an heiress, and all the young men of W—shire, desirous of marrying, thought she would make a very charming wife, and lost no opportunity of making themselves agreeable to her. Being by nature a flirt, Ida accepted the attentions very graciously, but this evening they did not afford her quite so much pleasure as usual.

Once, as she was dancing a quadrille, with a

particularly uninteresting young squire who could talk of nothing but the “splendid run” they had had that morning (“just as if,” Ida thought, “the world contained only foxes!”) she observed Arthur leaning against a pillar near, and watching her movements, very attentively.

She tried to be annoyed, but the endeavour was unsuccessful, for she was bound to confess that the young officer looked exceedingly miserable, and—exceedingly handsome!

Does not somebody say that a woman's only consistency is her inconsistency? One is sometimes really very much inclined to believe it, especially when such specimens of feminine contrariety come beneath one's notice as Ida St. John.

Considerably impressed by what her father had said concerning the Earl of Westlynn, she had made up her mind that she must give up all thoughts of Lord Dering as a possible husband, for Sir Douglas St. John would assuredly never consent to their union, and to marry without his sanction would be an impossibility. She had, therefore, on the last occasion of their meeting treated Arthur with

marked coldness in order that he might understand his attentions were disagreeable to her; but now that he took her at her word, and made no effort to approach her, she was inclined to feel injured, and to accuse him of fickleness!

Having been conducted by her cavalier to a seat, and sent him off in search of some claret cup, she made the slightest possible motion of her fan in Arthur's direction. At first he did not seem inclined to obey it, but after a moment's hesitation, and a glance at the bright, dark face, with its coronet of berries, he came irresolutely towards her—looking, however, rather stiff and formal.

"How do you do, Miss St. John? Can I do anything for you?" he said, bowing, but not attempting to shake hands.

If Ida was impressed by his altered demeanour she did not show it.

"Yes, you can," she responded, composedly. "You will greatly oblige me by not continuing to stare at me in that dying-deck fashion. If you like to earn the title of 'knight of the rueful countenance,' I would rather people did not accuse me of being the cause of your woe-begone condition."

"Very well, Miss St. John. If it will be any satisfaction to you I will leave the room altogether."

"Dear me, no! There is not the least necessity for doing that. If you wish to go early, pray what did you come here for at all?"

"To make a fool of myself—so it seems," he rejoined, bitterly.

"Well," said Ida, looking up at him with gravely opened eyes, "you are not the only one in that predicament. I don't know whether it is any consolation for you to know it."

He was about turning away when she dropped her fan, and as he was in common politeness bound to pick it up, it hindered him from carrying his intention into effect. As he bent down to restore the ivory toy she raised her eyes so that they met his fully, and forthwith every thought of flight vanished from Lord Dering's mind, and he was only conscious of the fact that those eyes were the largest, softest, deepest, most luscious eyes that had ever gazed at him!

He immediately sat down at her side, saying, with a half groan,—

"How am I to interpret your conduct, Ida?"

"In the way you like best," was the retort, spoken much more gently than usual.

"Then I should believe that you were sorry for having treated me so disdainfully, and wished to make amonement!" promptly.

As this was precisely what Ida *did* mean, she immediately denied it, but contrived to infuse in her denial a sort of hint that it was just possible she might be brought to this state of mind.

"Then you'll dance the next dance with me?" said the Viscount, his spirits rising perceptibly.

"I don't think I can. You see—your father is here, and—"

"And—what?"

"Well, everybody knows he and papa are not friends."

"That does not make any difference to us."

"Oh, yes, it does—in a measure. Perhaps Lord Westlynn would not care to see you dancing with me, and I am sure my father would not like the idea of it. He is not even aware that you and I are acquainted."

Arthur looked grave, but it seemed to him the time had come for speaking out, and he resolved, at all risks, to come to a perfect understanding with Ida. He knew that he loved her honestly and truly, but he had sufficient self-respect to be aware that it would be unmanly to let her play and coquette with him as she had been doing lately.

"Well, then, if you do not dance with me, let us take the opportunity of talking. We will go into one of those evergreen recesses,

and then we shall run no risk of being interrupted, as everybody will be dancing."

Ida took his arm, and obeyed him quite meekly, conscious that there was an air of determination in his manner which had not been there before, and which, somehow, exercised a dominating influence over her.

"Now," he said, when they were seated, "I am going to speak very plainly to you, Ida, and remember, that it is for the last time. It is all very well for you to trifle with men whose only intention is to flirt, but it becomes a very different matter when one seeks you for his wife—as I do. I have told you before that I love you, but for all that, I am not going to be made the slave of your caprices, and if you don't care enough for me to treat me properly, why, I will go and never trouble you again."

"I think I have heard you say something of the sort before, have I not?" she demanded, with roguish demureness.

"Perhaps you have, but this time I mean what I say—every word. I don't say that it would not be a great blow for me to give you up, but unless you give me a straightforward 'yes,' I shall go away and join my regiment directly my friend Verrall leaves the Court."

"And if I say 'yes'?"

His face changed, and his hands closed on hers.

"Then the happiness of my life will be assured."

She paused a little while, her carmine flushed cheeks and tremulous lips bearing witness that she was not unmoved by the appeal. She knew she had lost her master, but even yet she did not like confessing it.

"Speak to me, Ida, tell me the truth," he pleaded, bending down till his breath fell hotly on her cheek.

"The truth is, then—that I love you!"

They were in a crowded ballroom where there were a good many sharp pairs of eyes to watch them, as Arthur could not indulge in any demonstration of affection, but he pressed the little hand of which he had contrived to possess himself, and for him and Ida the moments that followed were fraught with a bliss too great to be either written or spoken.

Happiness does not come to us often, and when it comes it does not stay, but there are times—brief and fleeting, it is true—when the world is, indeed, an enchanted world, and everything it contains is colored by the rosy tints of youth, and glided by the golden elixir of that divine draught which we call love.

An absolute change came over Ida. She was no longer the saucy, defiant, little coquette, but a yielding, gentle maiden, submitting herself to her lover, and most happy in her submission.

Presently, however, other and less pleasing thoughts came, and she looked up at Arthur in some alarm.

"What is the matter?" he asked, tenderly.

"Of what were you thinking?"

"Of papa."

"Well, what of him?"

"I am quite sure he will never give his consent to our engagement."

"Why are you so sure?"

"Because he dislikes your father. He told me so on one occasion when I was speaking to him. Arthur," she added, hesitating, "do you know the reason of the enmity that exists between our parents?"

"I do not. Once I asked my father something about it, but he evaded giving me an answer. Still," speaking in a different tone, "whatever their quarrel may have been, we must not allow it to affect us."

"But, Arthur, can we prevent its doing so?"

"We will prevent it, my dearest. Don't you know, Ida," he continued, very seriously, "that love is a thing not to be lightly put aside, and that you and I are of an age when we can, and ought to, judge for ourselves? Children owe their parents certain responsibilities, but those responsibilities should not

be allowed to interfere with such an important part of their life as marriage—that is to say, when the children have arrived at years of discretion, as you and I have. Your father cannot have any just cause for refusing me your hand. I am in a position to meet him as regards settlements."

Ida made a hasty sign of negation.

"Such things as that would not influence his judgment in the slightest degree."

"My family is at least equal to his own," added the young man, not without a suspicion of pride in his voice, "and as he does not know me he cannot object to me personally."

"And yet," murmured the girl, "I fear he will never give his consent."

Dering himself was under no such apprehension.

Elated at his victory over Ida, he did not for a moment trouble himself with anticipation of refusal at the hands of her father.

These family squabbles were oftentimes all nonsense, he told himself—a mere trifle of misunderstanding, which a few words of reconciliation would suffice to efface, and Sir Douglas St. John could not possibly wish for his daughter a more eligible parti.

Ida would be Viscountess Dering—in course of time Countess of Westlynn—what more could any father desire?

"At all events," said the girl, after a few moments' consideration, "you must let me speak to him first."

"Do you think that will be best?" he inquired, not particularly well pleased at the proposal, for he would have liked to manage the affair by himself.

"Yes," grimly, "I am sure it would."

"Very well then, but you must take the first opportunity, for I shall come to the Manor some time to-morrow morning."

"Postpone your visit till the afternoon. Papa never likes to be disturbed at his studies in the morning."

Arthur smiled at this evidence of her thoughtfulness on her father's behalf.

"Good little girl!" he murmured approvingly. "What a capital wife you will make, Ida!"

"Don't be too sure of that," she returned, sadly. "I may turn out a Tartar, and then what will you say?"

"That I never was so much deceived in my estimate of human nature before! Oh! my darling! I cannot tell you how happy you have made me! What shall I do to prove my gratitude?"

He gazed so rapturously into her eyes that Ida drew back in alarm, lest anyone should have observed them.

"You will show your gratitude by behaving in a decent and proper manner," she rejoined, promptly, "so now you must go and dance."

"Dance with anyone but you? Impossible!"

"But you must, sir—I insist upon it!"

As usual, she had her way, and was soon amongst the dancers again, looking even more brilliant than before.

"My dear, you have danced too much; come and sit down for awhile," said Mrs. Morton, taking possession of her, and forcing her on the seat. "You are quite flushed."

"So is every other girl in the room."

"Yes, but not with such a bright colour as yours."

Ida was more obedient than her chaperone could have expected, and remained quite demurely by Mrs. Morton's side, watching the colour and movement around her with a slightly tremulous smile, as if her thoughts were engaged very happily—as, indeed, they were.

Suddenly she looked up—was forced to look up, by the magnetic power of a pair of dark eyes belonging to a man who was half-leaning against the door, and whose glance had rested on hers.

He was a tall man of about forty, with perfectly black hair and a long black moustache, dressed in regulation evening dress, and with

nothing remarkable about him at first sight. He nevertheless possessed a striking individuality that, on a second glance, singled him out from his fellows, and impressed the beholder with an all-pervading sense of power—such power, perhaps, as the snake possesses over the bird that he has selected as his victim.

Quite involuntarily a shudder stirred Ida's limbs as her eyes met his, but, strangely enough, she did not withdraw her gaze—nay, it remained riveted on him with an intensity that, if asked, she could not have attempted to explain.

The gentleman himself was the first to look away, and then, with a rapid glance round, he walked towards Mrs. Morton, and bowed low.

"May I recall myself to your recollection?" he said, in soft, carefully-modulated tones, that lingered on the ear like the notes of a flute.

Mrs. Morton stared at him in astonishment; then recognition seemed to dawn upon her.

"Is it really you, Colonel Fanshawe?" she exclaimed.

"Really I, and no one else. Are you very much surprised to see me?"

"Indeed I am. I thought you never intended returning to England again."

"Ah, I thought so myself once; but I have changed my mind, thereby assuming one of the attributes of your own charming sex."

"Have you been here long?"

"One week exactly."

"And how long do you intend staying?"

"That I cannot tell you, as it is a point on which I have not yet made up my mind. I will do myself the pleasure of calling on you to-morrow, if I may, and give you the history of my sojourn abroad—supposing it is likely to interest you. But, meanwhile, may I beg an introduction to your companion?"

Mrs. Morton complied with the request after a little hesitation; but it was clear that she was not particularly pleased to do so.

Colonel Fanshawe immediately placed himself on the other side of Ida, and began a conversation to which the girl at first returned monosyllabic replies.

Colonel Fanshawe, however, was evidently a man who cared little for rebuffs, for he continued his remarks with a certain airy easiness that proclaimed him a master in the somewhat difficult art of manufacturing small talk.

After occupying himself for some time with general subjects he proceeded to personal ones.

"Is your father as much a recluse as ever?" he asked.

Ida looked a little surprised.

"Do you know my father?"

"I used to; and I hope to renew my acquaintance ere long—that is, if he receives visitors."

"He receives very few; only his intimate friends."

"Ah! I could once lay claim to that title, and I daresay he will allow it me now. At all events, I shall call upon him very soon."

Ida could hardly have explained the feeling with which she regarded this new-made acquaintance.

It was not altogether dislike, and yet it partook of it; it was not exactly fear, and still there was a portion of fear mixed with it. It was a sort of fascination in which existed an element of repugnance.

She wished uneasily she had never met him; and yet, when she thought over her wish, she was inclined to think it foolish, for what difference could a casual acquaintance possibly make to her? It might happen that she would not see him again; and even if she did, it would probably be only to say, "How d'ye do?" and then, "Good-bye."

Ida was not particularly imaginative, neither was she superstitious, but if she had been either she might have woven some strange theory regarding this peculiar feeling; as it

was she dismissed it, and laughed at herself for her own foolishness.

The foolishness consisted in not heeding a natural instinct, not in dismissing it.

CHAPTER XVII.

The morning after the ball Verrall was aroused from slumbers that, in consequence of his having come to bed so late, were rather profounder than usual by the entrance of Lord Dering's valet, who handed him a telegram.

"It came last night, sir," he added, "and the hall porter forgot to give it you."

He retired, and Eric lazily opened the envelope, whose contents he supposed to be from the War Office; but as soon as he read them his expression changed, and he jumped out of bed immediately, and hastily threw on his clothes.

When he was dressed he went to Arthur, who was still in bed, although not asleep, for he was thinking of the events of the preceding evening, and wondering how Lord Westlynn would take the announcement of his betrothal.

"Hullo! Where are you off to?" he exclaimed, surprised at seeing his friend in hat and ulster.

"I have had a telegram saying my mother is dangerously ill, and so I am going to her at once. Will you kindly make my thanks and excuses to your family for this abrupt departure?"

"Certainly. But you will come back?"

"Yes, if I can; only in these sort of cases one can never say with certainty what one's plans may be; they are so liable to alteration."

"Have you ordered a carriage to take you to the station?" inquired Arthur.

"I took the liberty of asking that the dog-cart might be got ready. I thought you would not mind."

"Mind! I should think not. Good-bye, old fellow. I hope most sincerely you will be greeted with good news on your arrival."

Eric thanked him, but in his own heart was very doubtful whether the wish would be fulfilled. His mother was not a person to send a telegraphic summons unless there existed an urgent need, and to him the fact seemed significant enough.

A little later, and he was driving along the frost-bound road in a high cart, which permitted him to see the country on both sides. His face clouded even more deeply than before when he caught a glimpse of the turrets and battlements of the Castle, and he turned away his head quickly, as if the sight was unpleasant to him.

Luckily he caught a train which would take him within a couple of miles of his destination, for the little village of Lexham boasted no station of its own, and was dependent on the larger village of C— for its means of locomotion.

Who amongst us has not been placed at some time or another in a similar position to that of Eric? Who has not received a message from the sick or dying, and hurried off to obey its summons, haunted the while with the thought that, after all, he may be too late, for death tarries for no man?

Verrall chafed with impatience at each stoppage that was made, involuntarily cursing the slowness of the train. Although he knew that bad news might greet him at the end of his journey he was none the less anxious to reach it, for, like the rest of us, he preferred the most sorrowful certainty to the agonies of suspense.

As he was borne along through the wintry fields, where the ice king had bound the brooks with his iron frost, and a few crows were striving hard to pick up a living, his thoughts went back to his childish days, when he and his mother had lived alone in the little country village; and his great delight had been to "play soldiers" with the neighbours' children.

He had always taken the lead in everything

with these playfellows, not only because he was a better athlete than any of them, or because he was the strongest boy for miles round, but because he was somehow different to these children of the cottagers, who recognised the difference by bestowing on him the title of "Gentleman Eric."

He had been very fond of his mother—fond of her as children grow fond of a nurse who has carefully tended them, for the two were totally dissimilar in taste, habits, and feelings; and, although there was affection, there was very little sympathy between them.

Of his father Eric knew nothing, Phoebe Verrall's husband having died when the child was a mere baby. He was buried somewhere in Birmingham, of which place he had been a native, and Eric had never even seen his grave.

There was no conveyance at the station in which he could drive to Lexham, so he had to walk—which was, perhaps, preferable under the circumstances.

In half-an-hour he had arrived at the one street of the village, and paused before a green gate, which led into a garden, at whose farther end the house stood. A small, unpretending little house, with thatched roof and dormer windows, but wearing a certain air of spick-and-span cleanliness that may have been the result of the whitewashed walls and shining windows, on each of the sills of which stood a row of plants in exceedingly red pots.

There was no need to knock or even turn the handle, for the door was noiselessly opened as he stood on the threshold, thus showing that he had been watched for.

In the person who admitted him he recognised an old woman named Martin, who was the nurse of the village.

"Sh!" she whispered. "Don't make a bit more noise than you can help, for she's a goin' fast."

Without staying to hear more Eric walked swiftly and quietly upstairs and into a small but scrupulously neat and clean room. Here, lying on a bed, the snowy sheets of which sent out a faint perfume of rose leaves and lavender, was a woman of rather more than middle age; her white face and the restless movement of her fingers as she picked at the counterpane, proclaiming that, for her, the sands of life had well-nigh run out.

Her eyes were closed, but soft as had been her son's footsteps she had heard them, and her expression at once changed—became much more animated.

She put out her hand feebly, and he knelt down and reverently kissed it.

"Why didn't you come before?" she whispered.

"Because I did not get the message until this morning. I started directly I had it."

She looked more satisfied.

"I knew you would. Betsy Martin said you were so full of your grand new friends that you would not care to leave them for me, but I knew better."

She closed her eyes again, then, after a pause of nearly five minutes, opened them and looked very earnestly at the young man.

"Eric, I'm going to tell you a secret," she said, speaking slowly and hardly above a whisper, but, nevertheless, with great distinctness; "I promised I would never tell it you, and I've kept my promise till now, but I know I'm dying, and it seems to me I can't go without telling you the truth. Eric, have you ever fancied I was not your own mother?"

Eric shook his head. No, such an idea had never struck him.

Mrs. Verrall seemed relieved.

"That shows I've done my duty by him," she murmured, in soliloquy. Then, "you are not my child; you are no kith or kin of mine."

She paused, and he looked at her bewilderedly. Had she lost her senses? No, for her eyes were clear and calm, and she spoke in the measured, weighty accents of one who speaks truly.

"You may well be astonished," she said, when he did not speak; "but I say it again

—there's ne'er a drop of my blood, nor my husband's, in your veins."

"Then who am I?" he said, recovering a little from his extreme surprise.

"I don't know."

"Not know—don't know who my parents are?"

"No, I am as ignorant of it as you are."

There was silence. He did not like to question her, for evidently her strength was ebbing fast. In obedience to a motion of her hand he gave her a spoonful of brandy, which seemed to revive her, and she spoke again.

"I want to tell you all I know, for no one else can tell you," she began, half raising herself on her pillows, and holding his fingers firmly clasped in her own, "so I shall say it as short as I can, for I know I haven't got much time left. Well, when my husband died, more than twenty years ago, I was left with one child, and rather poorly off. We lived in Birmingham then, and I eked out my income by letting apartments—as I have done since. Yet, try as I would, I couldn't manage to make two ends meet, and so I advertised for a child to take care of, and bring up with my own."

"Well, one evening, just after dusk, there came a strange sort of hurried rap at my door, and when I went to answer it there stood on the step a slight, young-looking lady, holding in her arms a child who was asleep. The child was about three years old, and far too heavy for her to carry; but I suppose he had fallen asleep in the train, and she didn't like disturbing him. I asked her inside, and then she told me she had come in answer to my advertisement."

Mrs. Verrall paused, had another spoonful of brandy, and continued,—

"She spoke rather quickly, and seemed nervous; but she came to the point at once, and told me straight out she wanted me to take to the child altogether. She said she would give me twenty-five pounds down, and another twenty-five in six months, and that afterwards she would pay me twenty-five pounds a year until the boy required some education, and then she would give me extra for his schooling. It was not much, but she told me she could not afford more, and I knew that fifty pounds would be a good deal to me, so I agreed."

"I asked her what the boy's name was, and she said 'Eric,' but that she wished him to be called by my surname. Naturally enough, I asked her also if the child was her own, and she said 'no,' but that she was its legal guardian. She informed me that before entrusting the boy to my care she had made inquiries concerning me, which were answered satisfactorily, and therefore she was satisfied that I should treat him kindly. I assured her that I would do so, and she left, having first of all given me five Bank of England notes for five pounds each."

"About three months later my own little son died, and I don't know what I should have done if I had not had little Eric to console me. I grew very fond of him, and when the lady came again, at the end of six months, I told her I would not part with him for anything. She seemed pleased, and paid me the other twenty-five pounds, and then I told her I intended leaving Birmingham, and going to Loxham to live. I had been offered a house at a very low rent here, and I thought I could make my living by letting part of it. The lady, who I called Miss Jones, said it was a good plan, and she much preferred Eric's living in the country, but that as I was going to move into an entirely fresh place, where I was not known, I had better let people imagine Eric to be my own child, and so I did."

The young soldier was listening to the recital like a man in a dream, but his faculties were so keenly on the alert to gather the meaning of all that the dying woman said that he really had not the time to indulge in his extreme surprise. Again he moistened his lips, and finding she did not speak, he said,—

"Have you seen the lady since?"

"Yes," she answered, after a pause, and speaking in a more laboured manner than even she had done before, "she has been here two or three times, and the money has been paid regularly up to the time that you went and enlisted. Since then I have neither seen or heard from her."

Another pause. Eric was trembling with anxiety to put more questions, but humanity forbade his doing so. He saw that Mrs. Verrall's breath was coming slower and more laboriously, and that speaking was an effort with her, so he remained silent, watching her, and ready to anticipate her wishes.

What an awful hour was that which followed! Death Eric had often seen before, but he had never waited for it as he did now. Better he told himself, a thousandfold better, to be shot down on the battlefield than lie on a bed, struggling with that dread enemy which must eventually conquer, but which we are all so anxious to stave off, be it only for a few minutes.

Mrs. Verrall seemed to sink in a state of coma, that left her unconscious of all that was going on around her. Nurse Martin came up and looked at her.

"Shall I give her another spoonful of brandy?" asked Eric.

"No, don't give her anything. She's going off peaceful now, and it's best not to disturb her."

So Eric continued his vigil all day long, and although he listened with ears strained to catch the slightest whispers that might fall from her lips, he was not rewarded by the faintest attempt at one.

Then the January evening closed in, and the sun set in beds of scarlet splendour, that threw a rosy reflection on the sick woman's face.

At last she opened her eyes, but only to close them again. Her hand clenched, a long quivering sigh broke from her lips, and her spirit winged its way to that high throne of Judgment, where Heaven grant we may all find mercy!

Eric fell on his knees, and the nurse reverently covered the face of the dead woman.

(To be continued.)

LONG LIFE.—"Thousands of people annually ruin their constitution," says a physician, "by simply swallowing too much medicine. It may seem a very strange thing for a medical man to say, but it is nevertheless a fact. It is a dangerous thing to fly with every little ailment to the medicine chest. The use of tonics, unless under medical advice, should be discontinued; a tonic is sharper than a two-edged sword, it is a tool that needs to be used with caution. There are now, I am sorry to see, some aerated waters coming into use which contain the strongest mineral tonics, that are apt to accumulate in the system with the most disastrous results. They should, therefore, not be drunk *ad libitum* as to quantity, or without guidance as to quality. Rest should be taken with great regularity. One day in seven should be set apart for the complete rest of both body and mind. Independent of this, all who can afford it should take an annual holiday. Travelling is quite cheap, and two weeks or a month's relaxation from care and business cannot make a big hole in the purse of one who works all the rest of the year and knows how to economise time. Innocent pleasure and wholesome recreation conduce to longevity. All work and no play sends Jack to an early grave. Recreation is to the mind and nervous system what sunshine is to the blood. As a physician, I must be allowed to say just one word about the calming, quieting effect of religion on the mind. The truly religious make by far and always the best patients, their chances of recovery from serious sickness are greater, and so is their chance of long life, simply owing to the power they have of submitting themselves quietly, yet humbly and hopefully, to whatsoever may be before them."

BUT NOT OUR HEARTS.

CHAPTER V.

THE lovers strolled slowly through the quaint old garden that surrounded the Rest, beautiful with a bright luxuriance of bloom and blossom, loitered by the sun-dial, looked at the half-dozen gold fish in the antique marble basin—the property, and only pets of the twins, save a tortoise, which occasionally hid itself for weeks together, causing them many anxious hours with regard to its welfare; and, finally, after picking some mignonette and verbena, went out through the great iron-clamped door into the lane which led down to the Dene high-road.

They had not proceeded far when a sort of Indian war-whoop made them turn, and they saw the boys running as hard as they could through a field of standing grain, just because it was a short cut to the road, Bertie and Blackie, by reason of their longer legs, leading.

"You young rascals!" shouted Paul, as they approached, "how dare you come through the corn?"

"Shortest way, old man," returned Blackie, coolly, hanging on to one arm, while Bertie, displacing his sister, possessed himself of the other, and Bob and Billy seized lovingly on to his coat-tails, and clung to them with an affectionate tenacity which threatened to detach them from the body of the garment.

"Shortest way, indeed! I have a great mind either to thrash you myself or to take you all into Farmer Sturgis, and hand you over to his tender mercies."

"Pooh!" responded Master Herbert, squeezing the arm he held. "You thrash us! You're much too fond of us to do that."

"I am not so sure. I've told you not to do this often before, and I am very much vexed at your utter disregard of my wishes."

"Don't be angry, Paul," entreated Billie, giving the coat-tail he held an imploring tug; and as the young man looked at the little fellow, who was very small for his age, looking barely five instead of eight, and who, moreover, bore a remarkable resemblance to Opal, and had the same amber-coloured hair and deep azure eyes, such a contrast to his brother's coal-black locks and brown orbs, his face softened, and the stern curves about his mouth relaxed. It was impossible to be angry with a cherub, and Billie was exactly like those Guido loved to paint.

"You won't do it again?"

"We promise we won't," they chorussed. "Very well then. I'll let you off this time. And now, Bert, take all the books and run home with them, and then come after us as fast as you can. We are all going to lunch at Temple Dene."

"Oh, I say, that's prime!" shouted Bertie, throwing his blue satchel up in the air, regardless of the heads that might be damaged in its descent. "Now young 'uns, hand over your books. I'll catch you up in a brace of shakes," and away he flew, swift as an antelope, seemingly in no way impeded by the satchels that slapped and banged against his legs as he ran. But then he had a strong incentive to speed. A lunch at Temple Dene! That meant profusion, luxury in his eyes, and that of his half-starved brothers—jam, and tarts, and fruit, and as much as they liked to eat—no one watching them with anxious eyes to see that a double portion was not devoured, and the morrow left dinnerless! No, they might cram as much as they liked, and make havoc amongst the dainties Mrs. Marshall provided when she knew Opal was going to lunch or dine at her fiancé's house.

"The sweetest young lady in the world," was the old cook's verdict on Miss Vane, and it was a correct one, for a more amiable, gentle, kind, soft-hearted creature never breathed than the girl Paul Chiocherly loved.

And so he thought as he sauntered along,

with Blackie and Bobbie on either side, and watched her leading little Billie by the hand, and listening with maternal tenderness and compassion to his account of how a big boy had pursued him into a corner of the playground, and pulled his ears until he gave up three dearly-prized glass marbles, and how Blackie had come at the finish and thrashed the bully, and made him disgorge his ill-gotten gains.

"Poor little man!" said Opal, stooping to kiss the reddened ears, and patting the tiny hand she held in a way that made her lover wish someone would half drag the organs of hearing off his head, in order that he might be so caressed. "That was a wicked, bad boy."

"Yes. I don't think he'll do it again though," and Billy shook his bright, curly head knowingly.

"Why?"

"Because Blackie pummelled him awful." The grammar was bad, but the reason excellent.

"Never mind, old man," laughed Paul, "you'll meet with worse things than that as you go on through life, and you shall have six jam puffs to make up for the pain you felt."

"Shall I?" questioned the child, with distended eyes.

"Yes. Six all to yourself!"

"Then I should'n't mind having my ears pulled every day. That isn't as bad as feeling hungry," he added, with unconscious pathos; and at his words the tears rose to Opal's eyes and the colour flushed to Paul's cheek, for they both knew what he meant, and how unconsciously he had disclosed the pangs he suffered.

Small, fragile, delicate, the daily pittance of coarse food he received, which often failed to tempt his dainty appetite, was not sufficient for him in either quantity or quality, especially the latter. Frequently he was quite unable to eat his share at meal-time, and passed it on to his brothers; but afterwards he would suffer greatly, and crave for the dainties he saw Ruby preparing for his selfish father, on which his wistful eyes would fix themselves with a longing, unobserved by all save Opal; and she, helpless to appease his hunger, would take him on her knee and sing to him, and tell him wonderful stories of fairies, ogres, and gnomes, until in the delight of listening he would forget the pangs that gnawed him, like a pack of sharp-toothed rats, and sometimes even fell asleep in her arms—a result at which her loving heart rejoiced.

He never gave utterance to his longings. Like Opal, he was singularly silent, unselfish, and uncomplaining, and bore his hard lot without bothering others, so that his stronger brothers, who would have done anything for the little fellow, who was the family pet, knowing nothing, accepted his share of the scraps when he offered them, and thought that he had no appetite, while the contrary really held.

"He is too delicate and too young to go to such a school; don't you think he is?" she asked, as they entered the Chase; and the boys, headed by Bertie, who had joined them again, breathless and rosy, scampered off to look at the deer.

"Too delicate, perhaps, hardly too young. No one would consider Bobbie too small to go to Levinge's," and he looked at the sturdy, black-browed youngster, who, a very short distance behind his elder brothers, was running along full of strength, and health, and spirits.

"No. But what a difference there is between them! No one would imagine they were twins," and she in her turn looked at the slight figure far in the rear of the others, with hat held in hand and wind-tossed golden locks.

"True. Bob looks quite five years older."

"And ten years stronger," she sighed.

"You mustn't sigh like that," he cried, "or you will make me sad."

"And I must not do that," she said gently. "You have care and trouble enough already."

"What a sorrow it must be to you to have to part with this place," she added a moment later, as they stood on the steps; and she glanced round at the glen with its winding brook and twining foliage, at the avenue of elms and oaks, and the noble Chase, and far-stretching park.

"It is," he assented. "Yet I can bear anything while I have [your love and affection]."

"You will always have that," she answered simply, lifting her lovely eyes to his.

"Then I shall always be rich, always be an object of envy to my fellow-men."

"I hope you will, my dear one."

"I shall. You need not fear. Life holds no blessing, for me save what this little hand can bestow," and tightening his clasp on it he drew her into the hall, and, seeing it was empty, said passionately, while he drew her arms around his throat,—

"Kiss me love. Let me feel the touch of those soft lips, which calms all my unrest, exorcises all my bad and sad thoughts," and obediently she kissed him, while the banner waved over their heads, and the old portraits looked grim approval.

"Now boys, wire away," he cried, a few moments later, when they were all seated round the dining-room table, with Benson and Fred in attendance, the former looking a little less stony than usual, in his delight at waiting on Miss Vane, whom he admired and liked quite as much as Mrs. Marshall did. "Here Bert, I know you like veal pie, and Blackie. This chicken is for you, Billie," and so on, until the boys' plates were heaped with good things, and he was at liberty to attend to his fiancée.

But Benson had forestalled him, and Opal wanted for nothing, and was daintily eating a liver wing of the chicken, with her eyes fixed on the little fellow at her side, who was doing ample justice to the fare, which just suited him, and looking forward to the six jam puffs, which presently he was gratified with, along with fruit and other goodies, until, for once in a way, he felt more than satisfied, and forgot that he had ever felt hungry.

Paul was delighted at the havoc made in the delicate pastry and tasty sweets. The only thing that damped his satisfaction was the thought that in a very short time he would be homeless, and unable to give them even a few hours pleasure and amusement. It would be so hard not to stretch out a helping hand, to be powerless to alleviate the distress endured by the girl he loved, and those dear to her.

Fate had dealt him a hard blow. For himself he did not care, but for others—there lay the sting.

Still, for the time, he put aside his troubles, and thought only to make his young guests happy, and he succeeded marvellously well. They scampered here and raced there, followed in a lumbering fashion by Turk, the great mastiff pup—a present to Chichester from a brother officer, and an embarrassing one too, for he hardly knew what to do with the great animal, who had attached himself to him in a marvellous way, and followed him like his shadow—handled the guns, and the spears, and the dented breast-plates, played hide-and-seek in the long corridors, and finally retired to the stables to chat with Jem, who was a great crony of theirs, and told them horrible, rambling stories, about gentlemen of the road who wore scarlet-laced coats and three-cornered hats, and carried huge horse-pistols, with which to blow out the brains of those travellers who were foolhardy enough to refuse to "stand and deliver" their gold and valuables.

Bert, Blackie and Bob enjoyed these sanguinary stories, but Billie was frightened at them, and clung to Opal's hand, expressing a wish to be allowed to accompany her and Paul,

a wish which was of course acceded to; and the three, after strolling through the viney, went out to meet Ruby—out into the brilliance and glory of the summer day, languid with warmth, sweet with the perfume of many flowers, the song of many birds.

Great yellow-eyed marguerites were springing 'mid the swaying grasses, blooming plums and luscious nectarines ripened in the warm sunshine. The poppies and charlocks flaunted their blooms amongst the golden corn, the meadow-sweet was turning brown, and the barley beginning to ripen—all nature showed that russet-garbed autumn was coming, tripping along with no tarrying feet, bringing ruddy hues and ripened tints to grain, and fruit, and flower.

"There is Ruby!" said her sister, as she caught a glimpse of a tall, slight figure in the distance. "Run to meet her, Billie, and give her that pretty bunch of flowers."

"But—I gathered them for you," expostulated the child with a little wistful look at his mignonette, honeysuckle, and other sweet-smelling spoils.

"Let me choose one or two then, and give the rest to her," and she detached three splendid marguerites, of a vivid yellow hue, and fastened them at her throat.

"You ought to give me one of those, at least," said Paul, with a fond smile, as Billie ran off rather reluctantly.

"One at least. Then I suppose you would like them all?"

"I should, most decidedly, after having nestled where they are."

"What will Billie say if I give away his flowers?" she asked helplessly, unable to refuse any request her lover chose to prefer.

"Say? Why, nothing. What could he say? 'What is thine is mine, lassie.' Isn't it?" he jested.

"Yes, dear, there they are," and she handed over the disputed blossoms.

"As you have been good and obedient I will give you back one, and fasten it in myself," and after adjusting two in his coat he suited the action to the word, and pinned the third amid the laces at her throat, chiefly for the pleasure of touching that warm, white neck, which was so temptingly soft.

"Thank you!" she replied, gratefully, quite unconscious of his base design and intent.

"Well, Ruby. Off duty at last?" he demanded, as she came up.

"At last," she responded, with a movement of her shapely shoulders which seemed to imply that for the time she had cast aside all household cares.

"Hope the governor's turtle and venison won't come to grief in Jenny's inexperienced hands?"

"Hope it won't, I'm sure. I shall have a fearful time of it for the next week if it does. Not that I mind now—getting used to it," and she laughed, showing her white even teeth, a queer, sarcastic laugh, odd to hear from the lips of so young a girl.

"Nothing like getting use to anything unpleasant when it can't be avoided, by hook or by crook."

"Just so," she agreed. "That is my opinion."

"And you act on it?"

"Yes," she nodded.

"Quite right. I admire your good sense, and your gown, too," he went on, banteringly. "By Jove! what a swell you are!" and he looked her up and down critically, an inspection which she bore with serene coolness, for she knew that the buff linen dress, fitting her slim, elegant figure like a glove, showed off her rich dusky complexion and ebony braids to perfection.

"Not much of a swell. This is the second summer I have worn this," touching the dress, "and originally it belonged to poor mother."

"You shouldn't tell that. No one would know it, and I am really quite sorry that your 'sweetness will be wasted on the desert

air.' In other words, that I have not got a few members of the aristocracy staying at Temple Dene, with 'much filthy lucre, and a mere modicum of brains,' on whom you might try your fascinations and wiles."

"Don't distress yourself," she retorted, quietly, a gleam in her blue eyes, so like, and yet so unlike, Opal's; for though of the same hue, shape, and size, the expression was totally different, usually being hard, keen, and cold, instead of a melting softness. "There is time enough for that. I am in no particular hurry for the next year or two."

"I rejoice to hear that, as I shall have time to look about, and try to catch a very big fish for you."

"Plenty, and I hope your angling will have happy results."

"I hope so, I am sure. Shall he have red hair, or white, a snub nose, or one looking heavenward, a—?"

"What a tease you are, Paul!" interrupted his intended, too soft-hearted not to come to the rescue of anyone being bullied.

"I am not teasing, my dear. I am in sober earnest, and so is Ruby. Ask her if she isn't."

"I shall do nothing of the sort, but order tea in the green-room. After a long walk under that broiling sun the poor child must want a cup terribly."

"Not so bad, duchess, being under the broiling sun as over the broiling fire, is it?" he laughed, addressing her by the nickname he had given her on account of her longing after grandeur and riches, and in his endeavours to make her youthful and girlish, instead of staid and womanly.

"Not nearly," she replied, sinking into an easy chair, and throwing aside the broad-brimmed hat she wore, "and a cup of Mrs. Marshall's tea in this snugger is worth a long hot walk." and she gazed round the queer, little three-cornered room, which led by a narrow passage to the library, and which was green all over.

The ceiling was tinted that hue, the walls were covered with stamped leather of the same colour, as well as the chintzes, and the carpet was a bewildering mass of leaves and grasses.

The furniture was ebony, and before the hearth of tiles, that glistened like emeralds, was spread a black bearskin, with head and feet complete, which proved irresistible to Billie, who squatted down on the rug, and began a minute examination of the great head, with its fierce, staring eyes, and formidable teeth.

"This is my idea of pleasure," said Ruby, after Benson had brought in the tea, equipage and a huge cake, covered with almonds and sugar, specially prepared by Mrs. Marshall, for the young ladies. "It is quite a pleasure to drink out of such a cup," and she gazed admiringly at the dainty bit of Salopian she held.

"Sorry I can't give it you," observed her host, ruefully. "Would if I could, but it is no longer mine."

"The mummy's?" she queried briefly, making up for the loss of lunch by munching steadily at a huge hunch of cake.

"Even so."

"They are hardly his yet," objected Opal with a little, half-smothered sigh at the thought of what her lover must feel at parting with trifles he had been accustomed to since infancy.

"No nothing is signed at present," chimed in practical Ruby.

"That makes no difference," declared Chickerly stoutly. "I told him I agreed to his terms, and that is as binding to me as any documents."

"It wouldn't be to me."

"I daresay not," she retorted quickly, looking at his future sister-in-law with disapproving eyes. "Women don't seem to have the same ideas about honour as men."

"They haven't," she agreed in a way that was meant to indicate that she thought it was

a good thing that the female portion of the community were less scrupulous than the male.

"They ought to have."

"Possibly so, still the contrary holds, and women don't go in for rubbish of that sort."

"My dear Ruby—"

"Now, Paul, don't read me a lecture, there's a dear boy," she interrupted. "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and there is a great deal of the sow about me, so your eloquence and wisdom would be wasted. Instead, let me wander about, at my own sweet will, and I'll promise not to horrify you any more to-day, by my heretical opinions. I'll only admire the family portraits, the family plate, and the family mansion, and forget for a while that such an odious person as Washington C. Spragg, Yankee dry goods' man, exists."

"Very well, do as you like," he replied, laughing in spite of himself at her comical grimaces and gestures. "Where do you wish to wander?"

"Everywhere through your ancestral halls," she answered enthusiastically; "from the garrets to the cellars."

"That will take some time. At what point will you begin?"

"Picture-gallery, please."

"May I go too?" asked Opal.

"Of course, my dearest," he responded warmly, and together the three trooped up the oaken staircase, closely followed by little Billie, who hung on to his sister's skirts, and Turk, who followed equally close at his master's heels, on their tour of inspection.

The house was an object of great and never-failing interest to the girls, who although having lived near it all their lives, had been in it but seldom, owing of late to Paul's frequent absences, and in Fishlake Chicherly's time to the disreputable people he entertained there, which made it an improper place for young girls to visit.

Still they had visited it occasionally, when its dissolute master had been absent, and were warmly welcomed by the servants, who were glad enough to see innocent, happy young faces in their midst instead of those older ones, marked and marred by shame, vice and dissipations of all sorts and kinds.

So the Duchesses loitered by the pictures, studying beauties in ruff and farthingale, flowered asque and high-heeled shoes, and beaus with trunk hose and pointed beards, and powdered heads, and wide-skirted coats, and while she loitered the lovers sat in the cushioned recess of one of the great mullioned windows, hand-in-hand, whispering that soft nonsense which is so sweet to ears that grow on heads over which eighteen summers have not passed, and the child and the dog played together, and the sun, streaming in through the stained glass, threw fantastic and queer-hued shadows on the polished floor, and outside reigned an enchanting silence, broken only now and then by a burst of song from the swelling throat of a feathered chorister; and Paul, as he sat there, hand-in-hand with her he loved, wished that time would stand still for a while, letting him enjoy the happy present and not hurry him on into that future which was so uncertain, which loomed so gloomily, and which, above all, must separate him from Opal.

Time, however, had evidently no sympathy for young lovers, as he sped on swiftly as ever, bearing away the rosiest moments; and Ruby too, tiring after a while at staring at the stiff, bepatched dames, and stern-looking cavaliers, asked if he would take them up to the turret-chamber.

At first he refused, having been inspired with a horror of the place ever since the mysterious death of his father; but as astute Ruby had heard enough of that event to make her wish to see the place where it had occurred, she worried him slightly, and at last he gave way to escape from her importunity, and reluctantly led them up to the gloomy room.

Turk shuffled and scrambled considerably, getting up the winding staircase that led from the chief bed-room, and on crossing the threshold he snuffed at the floor, and then threw back his head, giving vent to a prolonged howl while Billie pressed closer to Opal and whispered that "it looked as if a real ghost lived there."

Ruby was in nowise affected. With cool deliberation she went round examining the chairs, the clock with its jolly face, the many-drawered cabinet, and the card-table, with its ghastly and suggestive blotches.

She seemed to take a horrible interest in every detail of the apartment, and would have lingered there long only that Miss Vane, seeing Paul was uneasy, declared that she was going to pay her usual visit to the house-keeper's room; and so, fearing to lose the packets of cakes and jars of preserves Mrs. Marshall invariably gave, she tore herself away, and went down with the others.

The old woman was as plesed as ever to see the two girls, and loaded them with cakes and goodies of her own making, and finally, being alone with them, confided to them her overwhelming grief at the loss of the last Chicherly for a master, and her disgust and wrath against the interloper.

"Is he a nice gentleman, do you think?" inquired Ruby.

"Gentleman! He ain't a gentleman, missie," she responded, with infinite scorn.

"Why not?"

"He don't look like one firstly, an' he don't speak like one, secondly."

"What does he look like?"

"Common. He ain't no more a bit like Master Paul nor my Fred is. His clothes ain't made proper neither. They hangs down in a straight line from his neck to his heels, for all the world like a sheet on a pole, and then he's ugly. My word, missie, he'd frighten you if you met him sudden like on a dusky evenin'."

"He can't help his looks," expostulated Opal, gently.

"No, more he can't, missie," she agreed, "and may be he'll make a good master; he's liberal enough. But he aint one o' the old stock, an' I'd rather be a scullion to one o' them than I'd be lady-help to a new man," and bristling and bridling like an infuriated female turkey, the good woman shook her head till the ribbons and flowers in her mighty cap seemed all of a jumble.

"I daresay you would, still it can't be helped, and it's hardest on Mr. Chicherly," and holding out her hand, a condemnation which delighted Mrs. Marshall, she went to look for Paul and the boys, and finding them after some trouble, they all set off for the Rest through the soft stary dusk of the summer night, and reached it at last, a little weary, yet more than pleased with their day's amusement.

"I shall come over early to-morrow," whispered her lover, as he took his last kiss by the great laurel bushes, near the garden-door, and pressed her alight form for an instant to his breast as he turned away.

CHAPTER VI.

THE sunrays had hardly kissed the dew from the sward when Paul appeared next day.

"What news?" he asked, as he seated himself on his favourite perch, the rickety music stool, and looked at Ruby, whose usually calm and placid face wore a look of suppressed excitement.

"Why do you ask?" she answered, evasively.

"For information, my dear, chiefly, and because you look as though you had something wonderful to tell me. Has the wealthy suitor appeared, or the fairy godmother you are always expecting?"

"The latter," said Opal, quietly.

"And what is she like?" he went on, banteringly. "Does she wear a red cloak, peaked

hat, and sail through the air astride a broom-stick?"

"Don't be a goose," rejoined the youngest Miss Vane, testily.

"Don't be abusive," he retorted. "I only want my yearning for information gratified and satisfied."

"I will gratify it then," laughed his intended. "The fairy godmother is our great aunt, Lady Dorothy Derwent."

"Oh!" interjected Paul, and the "oh" spoke volumes.

"She is sister of the late Max Lonsdale."

"I know she must be rather aged."

"She is well stricken in years, and looks more like young Max's great-grandmother than his aunt."

"Have you seen her lately?"

"Not for five years. She used to come and see us occasionally while mother was alive, but since her death she has not visited us once."

"That does not speak well for her."

"She has been abroad most of the time," put in Ruby.

"Oh!" again observed the young man, intellectually. "And what is she going to do now?" he went on.

"Call on me. She is staying at Blacklands with the Bevoirs, and she wrote dad to-day that she would be over here one day this week."

"Then your fortune is made, Ruby. Let me congratulate you, for I have no doubt with her ladyship's aid in a year or two you will be a duchess, or at least a countess."

"What nonsense, Paul! I am surprised at you."

"Where does the nonsense come in? You will probably be asked on a visit to her town house, introduced to no end of grand people, and if you don't succeed in winning a fellow with strawberry leaves, at all events you will have a good chance of fascinating her nephew."

"He wouldn't do for me."

"Why not?"

"Well, in the first place he's an immensely big man, and I don't like big men. Then he has great china-blue eyes, and his hair is almost red."

"Ruby!" interrupted her sister, "how can you say such a thing? You can't really remember what he is like, for you only saw him once, seven or eight years ago, and you were too young then to notice his personal appearance."

"Oh, no, I wasn't," rejoined Ruby, coolly.

"I remember him perfectly, a great, long-legged fellow, with foxy, or if you prefer it, sandy hair, a ferocious moustache of the same extremely doubtful hue, the aforementioned china-blue eyes, a straight nose, nearly as long as his legs, white teeth, hands to match, a drawl, and a general air of conceit and self-satisfaction. Now isn't that a faithful portrait of our dear cousin Max?"

"An exaggerated one. Still, wonderful, considering the mere infant you were when you saw him."

"Then you have seen him since?" asked Clitherly.

"Yes. At the time of mother's death he came down to see papa on business matters."

"Yes," chimed in the younger sister. "I hadn't the extreme felicity of seeing him then, but I remember hearing of his visit, and also the remarks Aunt Dorothy made at the time when dad grumbled at having to give up the three hundred a year. She said that out of the two thousand per annum his father left him he had got rid of all by his extravagances save three or four hundred, and that the money which reverted to him on mother's death was a perfect godsend, as he was deeply in debt. He did offer fifty pounds a year to us, but dad stood on his pride and refused it, or rather pretended to. The fact of the matter was, he wanted all, and so wouldn't take a little, thereby losing all. I should have managed things better," she concluded, with a sagacious nod of the head.

"You would, you would," agreed Paul, laughing; "I don't doubt that, and I can quite understand that he wouldn't suit you as a *carosopo*."

"No, indeed," she continued, gravely. "Aunt said that a rich marriage was the best thing for him, only that he had been such a general lover that no one worth having would accept him, and that he was looked upon as 'scratched' in the matrimonial race."

"Poor beast!" muttered the young man, reflectively. "Hard lines on him if he cares for any one," and he looked at the fair girl beside him.

"But he doesn't, and couldn't," announced Ruby, decidedly.

"How do you know?"

"I judge by appearances. His eyes are cold, and he has a fishy look about him generally that shows he would be utterly incapable of feeling any great passion."

"I don't know that. Quiet, or, as you term them, 'fishy,' people when roused often love more deeply and faithfully than passionate ones. It takes much to awaken their feelings, but they are often more intense and enduring when once roused."

"Perhaps so. Yet I don't think the woman lives who could rouse Max from the contemplation of his own manifold and, in his eyes, matchless attractions."

"He must be a nice sort of man if Ruby's account of him be true."

"He must, indeed," rejoined Opal. "But I think she is not quite just, and I believe that under that affected manner lies a warm heart and a generous disposition."

"Hope so, I'm sure. And now you had better go out, and not waste such a fine morning in this den. I, like Ixion, am chained to a wheel, and have no choice. With you it is different. So adieu," and kissing her fingers airily she glided out of the room and joined shock-headed Jenny in the kitchen.

A few days later, as she was engaged, as usual, in culinary operations, the sound of wheels on the ill-kept drive made her look up, and she saw a carriage, drawn by a pair of prancing greys, coming swiftly up to the house.

"Fly, Opal!" she cried to her sister, who was patiently picking the stalks off black currants for a pudding for Mr. Vane's delicate appetite; "here is aunt. Tell papa, while I pull Jenny into shape," and suiting the action to the word, she literally pulled the rough locks into some sort of order, clapped a smart white cap on the top, pinned on a bib apron, and dragged the sleeves down over the red, beeflike arms. "Now go and open the door, and show Lady Derwent into the drawing-room, and, above all, confine your conversation to yes and no."

"Yes'm," replied the bewildered and transformed Jenny, disappearing with alacrity, while her young mistress, throwing off the coarse blouse she wore to save her neat linen gown from unsightly stains, washed her hands, and with one glance at the bleared, cracked mirror that hung over the mantel-shelf, and one touch of the ebony braid, she went to join her visitor.

Lady Dorothy gave a shrewd look round as she entered the drawing-room.

"Humph! not much money here," she muttered, as her keen glance wandered over the rickety chairs, shabby carpet, and poor attempt at ornamentation. "Clean, and some taste," she continued, noticing the snowy lace curtains, and bowls of roses, mignonette, verbenas, and other sweet-smelling flowers with which Opal, who had much taste in that way, had decorated the bare room. "Hope they will be ditto, with a little good looks thrown in. Ah! my dear," as the door opened, and Ruby entered. "Come to see you at last. Let me think now. You are the youngest, are you not?"

"Yes, aunt, I am Ruby," she replied, offering her cheek for the salute that was proffered, and in no way abashed by the magnificence

and style of the richly-dressed, keen-eyed, little woman before her.

"Ruby, ah yes, and Opal; funny names, but poor Anne had funny ideas about some things, and one of them was giving her children romantic names."

"My brothers have not romantic names."

"No—really. What are they? I quite forget."

"Herbert, Blackett, Robert, and William."

"Oh, ah, yes; twins, were they not?"

"Yes."

"And how have you all grown up—good-looking, eh?"

This question was put with a motive. Lady Derwent was a rich, childless widow, with a mania for chaperoning beautiful young girls. While staying at Blacklands she heard some one speak—probably a man—of Opal Vane's great loveliness, and forthwith she determined to visit the Rest, judge for herself if her grand-niece deserved the eulogy bestowed on her, and if she did take her under her protecting wing.

Her letter to Mr. Vane received a very cordial reply, for he had been thinking of opening his heart to her about his beautiful child's engagement to a penniless sailor, and asking her help to break it off.

"Opal is very lovely, every one says so. Billie is like her, and the three others resemble me. Do you think I am good-looking?"

This was asked with such an amount of inquiring coolness, devoid, however, of the slightest touch of vanity, that the old lady answered at once,—

"You are more than good-looking—decidedly handsome."

"I am glad of that. Your opinion is worth having on that subject, I am sure."

"Glad you think so," responded her aunt, with a sharp glance at the glowing face and azure orbs. "How old are you?"

"Sixteen next October."

"Humph! You look more like six-and-twenty."

"Yes, and that is a drawback."

"You mean to your matrimonial chances?"

"Yes. Still I may remain the same for twenty years."

"Probably you will."

"That is consoling."

"Very—to think that you will look as handsome and blooming at thirty-six as you do now."

"You won't think much of me after you have seen Opal," she said, quietly; for, whatever her faults, she was not jealous of the superior charms of her sister.

"That remains to be seen, and—here she is. Well, my love, do you remember your old aunt?"

"Oh, yes, perfectly!" replied the young girl, laying her fresh lips to the rouged and withered cheek.

"You have grown very like your mother."

"I am so glad of that," she answered, simply, not seeing the compliment implied. "There is no one I would sooner resemble than my dear mother."

"I am not surprised at that; she was as good as beautiful. And now tell me all about yourselves; what you do, and how you live, and everything?"

Thus adjured, Ruby, who had no false pride, gave her a real and true account of their household affairs, alluding only lightly to their father's selfishness, but hiding nothing of their miserable poverty, as she guessed that substantial assistance might be given them by the rich and eccentric woman.

"Humph! Don't get enough to eat, I suppose?"

"Not always."

"Growing boys have such large appetites," Opal hastened to explain.

"And growing girls too. However, the spare diet is evidently good for the complexion; and many town beauties would give their little fingers to possess such natural lilies and roses; and she tapped Miss Vane's blooming cheek with her exquisitely gloved

fingers, and looked at her beautiful face with great interest.

"Ever go out—to dances I mean?"

"No, aunt, not now. We went to several juvenile parties when we lived at the other house; since we have been here we have not been able to go anywhere."

"Got no dresses, I suppose?"

"No evening ones."

"Can you dance?"

"A little!" they both responded.

"Because I want—Ah! Copeland," as the door opened, and Mr. Vane came slowly in. "Long since we met. How do ye do?"

"Not well Dorothy—not well?" he replied, or rather groaned, for, like Ruby, he always had an eye to the main chance, and thought that a few groans might bring a brace of grouse, or a tender chicken as a gift from Lady Derwent. "My health has failed me sadly of late, owing, no doubt, to the privations I have to endure. I am rapidly becoming a confirmed invalid."

"Humph! Don't look much like it," she observed, with thinly-veiled sarcasm, eyeing the tall, elegant figure, and the aristocratic face, with its frame of ebony hair, which, save for a certain pallor the result of close confinement to the house, showed no signs of illness or decay. "Sit up too late reading, and don't take exercise enough. A ten-mile walk would do you good."

"A walk!" he ejaculated, lifting his hands in horror. "Ten miles! I could not walk one. If I had a carriage I would drive every day; as it is I prefer remaining at home."

"I daresay you would. But you see very few people can afford to keep a carriage. Certainly you can't."

"True—most true?" he agreed, with a dismal sigh. "My poverty is extreme, my comforts nil."

This was a lie, and the hot colour leapt to Ruby's face as she heard him, and thought of the hours she spent concocting dainty dishes, striving to make him comfortable.

"You forget your children," said Lady Dorothy. "They must be a great comfort and consolation to you. They ought to be," she went on, admiringly, "and you ought to be proud of your daughters, for it would be difficult to match their looks."

"Yes, I am proud of them," he said, slowly, his cold, yet intensely dark and handsome eyes resting on Opal's amber head with a lingering intent look.

"You ought to be!" repeated his visitor.

"You—think they are handsome?" he queried.

"I do!" with an emphatic nod.

"Yet that will be of little use to them shut up in this dreary old house."

"They won't always be shut up here."

"I hope not."

"That rests with yourself."

"How?"

"Well, the Bevoirs have some Americans with them—friends of this new man who has bought Temple Dene; and they are going to give a ball in honour of his arrival in our midst as a neighbour. I have power to invite them both. Will you let them come?"

"But—but—"

"But me no buts," she interrupted, hastily. "Say yes or no!"

"Yes, then; they have never been in a ball-room, though."

"Quite time they went to a dance in that case. The novelty and the amusement will be all the greater."

"True; still there is another drawback."

"What is that?"

"They have no dresses."

"I will see to that. Such young girls will only require muslins, and one-half of the guests will look solely at their faces, of that you may be sure. As to the other half, their 'envy, hatred, and malice' will simply be an ungracious compliment. Any other objections to make?"

"None. I am deeply grateful to you for

taking an interest in my girls, and giving them this opportunity of seeing the world," he responded, warmly, delighted at her playing into his hands, and giving Opal a chance of seeing that there were other men in the universe besides the one who filled her waking thoughts, and peopled her dreams when she slept.

"That is settled, then?"

"Yes, since you are so kind."

"Nonsense, no kindness. I shall be chaperon to the prettiest girls in the room," chuckled the old woman.

And as she sat there chuckling, with her short velvet cloak, high-crowned bonnet, her hands clasped on the top of her stick, and her nose and chin nearly meeting, the thought would steal into Opal's gentle mind that she resembled a witch somewhat; not, perhaps, one quite of the typical order such as Paul had jested about, but something superior, attired in fine clothes.

The withered face bore an almost unearthly look, and the keen, blue eyes were uncanny and piercing to an uncomfortable degree. Still it was not an unpleasant countenance, and when she smiled it altered her whole expression wonderfully, and banished the uncanny expression of the eyes.

"What would you like to wear?" she inquired of her nieces.

"I will leave it to you, aunt," modestly replied Miss Vane.

"Good; and you, Ruby?"

"Yellow muslin, please, with a few crimson flowers."

"Good again. You evidently know what suits you," and she directed a piercing glance at her younger niece, which that young person bore with the utmost equanimity. "I suppose you will deck your comely person with jewellery?"

"If I could I would, but I don't possess any," she replied, frankly.

"Humph! Where has your mother's gone to?"

"Sold," she rejoined, laconically.

"Necessity, Dorothy, necessity," explained Copeland Vane, while a red flush mounted to the roots of his dark hair, for he had disposed of the jewels to buy old books.

"Necessity, eh? Well, I can lend Ruby my garnets; they will just do for her."

"Thanks, aunt," she said, quietly, not showing any elation at the prospect of being adorned with a handsome suite of ornaments, as most girls of her age would.

"You won't require any," went on Lady Dorothy, turning to Opal. "This is ornament enough for you," and she touched the coils of amber hair. "A few forget-me-nots there and in the bosom of your gown will be sufficient."

"That will be very pretty, aunt. You know best."

"How like your mother, how like your mother in every respect," muttered her aunt, gazing at her.

"Yes, the likeness to dear Anne is striking," chimed in Vane.

"Striking, indeed; only the daughter surpasses the mother, as the sun does the stars."

"Yes, yes, just so," he assented, throwing up his head as though to intimate that that was due to the fact of his being her father. "We must not talk like this though; it will make her vain."

"I think not. She is hardly the sort of girl to prize personal beauty highly. Are you, Opal?"

"It is very nice to be pretty, aunt, but there are many other things I should prize more than good-looks. Talent, for instance. A clever woman can amuse herself so much better than a stupid one."

"Of course; you are quite right. And what is your opinion on the subject, Ruby?"

"I think that personal beauty is the most valuable thing a woman can possess, and one which will gain her everything she can desire,

if she has but the tact to make proper use of her power."

"Hear! hear!" laughed her ladyship, rattling on the bare boards with her stick. "Bravo! You won't be at a loss to do that, eh?"

"I hope not, aunt."

"So do I, for your sake; and now I really must be going. I shall be late for lunch, and Bevoir hates anyone to be an instant late. I shall come over and see you again soon. Won't ask you to Blacklands before the ball. Want you to appear like new stars in the firmament, and dazzle all beholders by your brilliancy. Ta-ta. Good-bye."

And bestowing a kiss on either of the girls, she took Vane's offered arm, and hobbled out to the Bevoir carriage, where the powdered-headed footmen helped her in, and the bewigged coachman drove off, followed by the Misses Vane's admiring eyes, and their father's envious ones.

"Don't know what the boys are like," soliloquized Lady Dorothy, as she leant back on the soft cushions; "but at all events I can see that Copeland's just as selfish and narrow-minded as ever, and that his cloak has fallen on his second daughter. Bold, handsome, impudent minx, clever and unscrupulous—just the sort of *protegee* for me. Evidently ready to snap at the first rich man who offers himself, and thus emancipate herself from poverty and slavery, for pandering to Copeland's tastes on nothing a-year must be an awful sort of slavery. The other one's an angel, both in face and temperament. It's a pity she's engaged to young Chichester now that he's penniless, for I'll bet my finest Honiton handkerchief Cope will part them. Fancy him letting her marry anyone who wasn't rolling in wealth! Not likely. She's a fortune to any man, and he'll make one out of her, and break her heart into the bargain. Poor lamb! If I'd had a daughter like that, my heart wouldn't now be the dried-up old pippin it is; and I don't think it is so dried-up but that I can feel for a sweet, aimable girl when she is placed in a nasty position, and Opal will be. Of that I haven't a doubt. Well, if I could take the trouble to hate any person on the whole earth, that person would be this selfish, frivolous, cruel, egotist, Copeland Vane."

(To be continued.)

LEARN TO GROW OLD.—After the half century of years is completed, men are liable to declaim about the vanity of things and to have a settled distaste for pursuits and amusements which occupied earlier years. It is a dangerous time. In order to find relief such men often break up the business vocations of a lifetime and seek in new experiments the glow and ardour which have vanished with youth. It is a prolific source of financial failure; often of domestic disruptions; sometimes leading to suicide or madness. Youth and its passions are not to be recalled by a change of locality or of business. What these people fret about is simply the departure of youth. They have not the philosophy to adjust themselves to approaching age and serenely await the end, and they plunge into chimerical business ventures and break up homes and seek new lands in the vain hope of reviving a fire which can never burn brightly again. There is not one man in a dozen with a fixed and ample income who can with patience submit himself to the conservative dictates of age, and with books and friends lead a life of innocent leisure. The struggle is always to make sixty beat with the impulsive numbers of thirty, and that can never be. The wise man will bow to the yoke, and by so doing will cease to feel it. It is a yoke which we all must wear save those which the Greeks declared were blessed of the gods because they died young.

LIVING AND LOVING TOGETHER.

Blest be, my darling,
The hour that I met thee!
Never in life
Can my fond heart forget thee!
We have been happy
In love without measure;
We have been true
To each other, my treasure.
True to each other,
Whatever life's weather—
Living, my darling,
And loving together.

Wake, oh, my dear one,
From out thy soft dreaming;
In at thy chamber
The sunlight is streaming;
Fain would I watch for
Thy rosy face peeping
Out at the casement,
Where blossoms are creeping.
True to each other,
Whatever life's weather—
Living, my darling,
And loving together.

Wake, oh, my sweetheart,
While angels watch o'er us,
Joy-bells are ringing
With love in the chorus.
"Haste to the wedding,"
They say in their gladness,
"When you are one, you
May banish all sadness."
True to each other,
Whatever life's weather—
Living, my darling,
And loving together.

M. K.

GLADYS LEIGH.

CHAPTER VI.

JAMES LORRAINE had seen many peculiar people in the course of his professional career. He thought he had met with a fair share of the world's eccentricities, but he had never known conduct which perplexed him so much as Lord Carew's.

It was strange enough, so the lawyer thought, to insist on rushing down to Arle and making acquaintance with his debtor under a disguised name, but to keep up the impersonation actually to attend Sir Hubert's funeral, still under a *nom de guerre*, seemed to Mr. Lorraine almost madness.

"You have my promise, Lord Carew," said the lawyer, a little pompously, when Royal returned to the office to make last arrangements. "I will not disclose to my partner the fact of your visit to Arle, but I must beg you to think over things seriously before you commit yourself to attending the baronet's funeral in disguise."

Royal drew himself up to his full height, and looked arkanse at the speaker.

"I suppose you are aware your presence at the Priory is totally unnecessary?" he said, coldly. "Sir Hubert left no will; the statement of his affairs could be made by any one, however ignorant of legal matters." "I am perfectly aware of that," returned Mr. Lorraine; "it is the deception I object to."

"That is my concern."

James Lorraine had to give in. He was a very cautious man, and would not run the risk of offending such a client as Lord Carew.

When the day came that all that was mortal of Sir Hubert was to be borne to the grave Royal followed in the slender procession, and was greeted by Dr. Jewell as Mr. Lorraine.

He came back to the Priory after the sad ceremonial and asked to see Miss Leigh. He hardly knew what he meant to say to her.

Long before he had ever seen her his course had seemed easy. If she resembled her mother he meant to fulfil his uncle's wishes by making her his ward. She was so many years younger than himself, so many years younger than Lady Barbara, that he had fancied their house could be her home, that she might live there as a younger sister.

From the moment he looked at Gladys Leigh this plan was put aside. He could not have told why he would have been puzzled to put his meaning into words, still more his reason, only a nameless something told him there would be no friendship, no sympathy, between Sir Hubert's child and the woman who was to be his wife.

"Gladys is very far from well," Mrs. Jewell said to him, simply. "Do not excite her, Mr. Lorraine."

"I will be careful, only," and there was a world of earnestness in the strong man's voice, "dear Mrs. Jewell, do persuade her to see me. I cannot return to London until I have spoken to her."

They showed him to the neglected drawing-room—the vast, desolate-looking room where he had heard her singing not so many nights before—and presently she came in, looking so fair and delicate in her deep mourning dress, so innocent and childlike in her sorrow, that a great longing came to Royal to take her in his arms, and beg her to let him take care of her for ever.

But he withstood the temptation. He remembered the Lady Barbara, who deemed him as her property, much as she claimed the magnificent trousseau her mother was selecting. He was bound by a solemn word. Not for him were those sweet, red lips—not for him to fill those grey-blue eyes with love light. He could be as nothing to Gladys Leigh, as less than nothing.

Only the idea of her being in poverty or sorrow troubled him—only it cut him to the heart to think that while he enjoyed vast wealth she might lack bare comforts. He thought it would still that strange, new pain at his heart just a little to know that as far as money went she was provided for.

"You wished to see me?"

Royal started. He had been so absorbed by his own thoughts that he had left Gladys, after all, to begin the conversation.

"Yes," he said, constrainedly. "I wished to speak to you, Miss Leigh, before I returned to London."

Gladys guessed what he had to say, and tried to help him out.

"I think I understand," said the girl, wistfully. "You have seen Mr. Brook, and you want to tell me that the Priory is now his property, and I must leave my home. At least, my father is spared this blow," and her lip trembled. "He died Sir Hubert Leigh of Arle; he had not to turn his back on the dear old Priory."

"Miss Leigh," replied Carew, conquering his emotion by an effort, "Mr. Brook is heir—is, indeed, master of the Priory, but he has no wish to occupy the place, and he would be pained indeed to drive you from your home."

"It is his," she said, almost sullenly. "I have no right to love it now."

"You have the best right in all the world. Miss Leigh, I have seen him—Julian Brook's heir I mean—and he wishes me to make a certain proposition to you."

"I will not listen to it."

"Pardon me," corrected Royal, quietly, "you will listen to it. You are too generous to insist upon my return to town with my errand unaccomplished."

"I see," she rejoined quickly; "you think Mr. Brook might blame you. I daresay he is a disagreeable sort of man. Well, I will listen."

"He takes upon himself all Sir Hubert's debts. As the possessor of the Priory this is only right. He begs you to remove any of the furniture or ornaments you prefer, and he wishes you to accept a small annual income of

three hundred a-year to keep you in the position to which you were in—"

"Stop," cried Gladys, interrupting him. "You have said too much. Every word is an insult to me."

"An insult!"

"I may be poor, but why should this upstart millionaire wish to make me a pensioner on his charity? Why should he offer me dole such as he would mete out to a beggar? I would rather work my fingers to the bone—I would rather beg my bread from door to door—than accept aught from the man I regard as my father's enemy."

Lord Carew thought he had never seen such a lovely vision as Gladys, anger lending a rose-pink bloom to her cheeks and a new fire to her dark eyes.

But what was he to do? How could he prevent the girl from taking her fate into her own hands, and exposing herself to all the horrors of poverty?

"I wish you would try and look at me as a friend," began Royal, hopelessly. "I may not know much of such things, but my mother is a lady, and I know how she would look at this."

"What would she say?"

"That you were acting unwisely in refusing this offer. You are so young, you see, Miss Leigh; you don't know how hard and cruel the world is to a friendless woman."

Gladys turned to him with a softened face.

"I think you mean to be kind, Mr. Lorraine," she said, gently, "only you can't understand how I feel."

"Why can't I understand?"

"You are of the people," said Gladys, simply. "I have heard that you are a self-made man" (Carew wished he had not personated Mr. Lorraine, "and you can't tell how one feels when one belongs to a grand old race like ours. The Leighs have been famous in history for centuries. They have entertained kings, and been the friends of princes; and I—I am the last of my line! How can I accept charity from such a man as young Mr. Brook?"

"You speak of him as if he were the dirt under your feet."

"He is a money-lender's son and heir."

Royal did not correct the relationship.

"Julian Brook was not a money-lender, Miss Leigh. I knew him intimately, and I assure you he was a gentleman."

"It may be," she said, half wearily, "but I can't accept aught from him or his."

"What shall you do?"

She did not resent the question, as he had half feared she would. She took his interest as a simple matter of course.

"Mrs. Jewell has written to my aunt—I shall call her aunt, but I think she is really a sort of cousin—and she has sent a letter inviting me to go and live with her."

For an instant Royal felt relieved—only for an instant.

He knew something of women, and unless this cousin were different to most, he feared the bread of dependence would not be very sweet to Gladys. She who had been mistress of the Priory for years, how would she brook the control of an elderly matron? And then, if this cousin had daughters, would not they be cast completely in the shade by Gladys and her bewildering beauty?

"Have you ever seen her? What is her name?"

"I have never seen her. She is Mrs. Pearson now. She married Mr. Pearson after my cousin Gerald's death. If he had lived longer than my grandfather she would have been a countess."

"And where does she live?"

"Somewhere in Kent. I don't much mind where it is. If I must leave Arle, I may as well be fifty miles away as ten."

"And you are going to make your home with Mrs. Pearson? You are not afraid of making this arrangement with someone you have never seen?"

"I must do something," said Gladys, with a

sort of choked sob. "I can't die just because I wish to. I must live on, and my dear mother's cousin is the nearest relation I have in the world. She must be kind to me."

"I hope she will be."

"Don't you think so?" struck by his tone.

"I hope so," Royal repeated. "For my own part, I had rather you accepted Mr. Brook's proposal; you could then have made a little home for yourself with the old servants, who are so fond of you."

She gave a heavy sigh.

"I think their fate troubles me more than anything," she said, sadly. "They have served us all their life," here she blushed crimson, "and for years they have had no wages! They are almost too old to find fresh situations, yet how are they to live?"

"That need not trouble you, if Mrs. Joan and her husband do not think of fidelity to you to refuse to stay at the Priory under a new master."

"Do you mean that Mr. Brook would really keep them?" asked Gladys, eagerly.

"I am to offer them situations in his employment as butler and housekeeper."

"Does he mean to live here?"

"I don't know."

This was strictly true.

"Is he married?"

"Not yet."

"Perhaps he is too young?"

"He is nine-and-twenty, Miss Leigh."

"I hope he will marry someone nice," said Gladys, thoughtfully. "I couldn't bear to think of a common, vulgar woman being mistress here!"

Royal rose; he was conscious he had stayed far longer than Mrs. Jewell would approve, and yet he had gained nothing. When he left that room the probability was he and Gladys would meet no more, they would be as strangers for all time; and yet he knew full well this blue-eyed girl, in her crepe trimmed dress, was dearer to him than Lady Barbara was or ever could be.

"Good-bye," he said, simply, a strange pathos in his voice. "You will connect me with the saddest portion of your life; I cannot hope you will have any kindly thoughts of me; but, Miss Leigh, if ever a day comes when you are in trouble, if ever you need a friend, then I beg you to remember I can have no higher pleasure than to serve you. A word or line would bring me to your side at any time, and all that friend or brother could do for you I would do most gladly."

"You are very kind," she faltered; "I think I have been very rude to you, Mr. Lorraine, but you will forgive me? My heart is very sore."

So was his. He took her hand, held it a minute longer than was necessary, and then went out of the room, feeling he left something behind him dearer than life itself.

When Mrs. Jewell went to find her young charge she was surprised. Gladys, who had been so calm and self-contained, Gladys, whose dry eyes had often amazed her, was leaning back upon the old sofa and weeping as if her heart would break.

"My dear, my dear," cried the kind little creature, "you must not grieve like this. What has Mr. Lorraine been saying to upset you?"

"Nothing."

"You would not cry like this for nothing, Gladys, and I told him to be careful not to agitate you."

"He didn't mean to," said Gladys, a little incoherently. "Oh, Mrs. Jewell! why didn't I have a mother?"

Mary Jewell started; of all regrets this was the one least to be expected. Had Sir Hubert left a son the confusion and disasters of his property would have gone on to yet another generation.

"What made you think of it, dear?"

"Mr. Lorraine. He was so kind, he offered to help me as a brother. Mrs. Jewell, he is so strong and brave, I should like to have had a brother like that."

Mary stroked the soft hair caressingly, and wondered just a little if Gladys had dreamed of another tie which might have united her to Mr. Lorraine with a closer affection than a sister's.

"He told me he wanted to see you on business, Gladys; did he bring any good news?"

The girl shook her head.

"Mr. Brook takes everything, then he pays the debts. He wanted to make me an allowance, but, of course, I refused that."

"I am sorry."

"Why?"

"I don't like to think of you as exposed to poverty, Gladys. I wish you would accept a share of our home. We are not rich, dear, but I think we could make you happy."

Gladys shivered.

"I should like to stay with you, only I could not bear to see strangers at the Priory; and then, you know, there is Aunt Pearson."

"Yes," admitted Mrs. Jewell, a little quietly.

"She sent a very kind letter."

Mrs. Jewell did not endorse this statement. Truth to say, she had tried very hard to like Mrs. Pearson's letter, and signally failed. She fancied the lady's second husband was beneath her in the social scale, and that Gladys would not find the Gables a very pleasant home.

"Remember, dear, if you are not happy with your aunt you must come back to us?"

"You don't seem to think I shall be happy?"

"My dear, I never said so."

"I must love any one who knew mamma."

"I don't think Mrs. Pearson knew much of Lady Violet," said the doctor's wife, gently. "She was only married about a year before Mr. Fane's death, and then she dropped all connection with his family."

"Then it is very generous of her to invite me."

There was not long to wait. The funeral was Tuesday, and the following Thursday Gladys was to start for her new home.

She would take with her nothing but her own wardrobe and a few ornaments that had been her mother's. Joan protested much against this refusal of all the old things endeared to her young lady by association and use.

"It's nonsense, Gobby," said the girl, fondly.

"Even if I could bring myself to accept anything from Mr. Brook I couldn't arrive at Mrs. Pearson's with half-a-dozen pieces of ancient furniture. Homeless waifs can't afford to store up treasures."

Joan looked at her reproachfully.

"I'd take care of them, Miss Gladys. Tony and I'd be proud to treasure up anything for you."

"Then you have accepted Mr. Brook's offer?"

Joan coloured almost as if she had been guilty of some heinous sin.

"If only we could have stayed with you, Miss Gladys, we'd never have said 'yes' to Mr. Lorraine's offer—never have thought of it; but since we must be parted from you, dearie, we both thought it'd be a comfort to us to stay on in the old place."

"I hope he will pay your wages," said Gladys, crossly, quite forgetting her own father's omissions in this respect. "Rich people are very mean."

"Indeed it sounds liberal enough, missie—twelve pounds a month. I can't rightly tell which part is wages and which board; but Tony says it's very handsome. Maybe it's Mr. Lorraine's doing; he's a nice-spoken young gentleman."

"And you are Mr. Brook's servants? It's wicked of me Gobby, but I think I'm sorry; I'm sure he's a bad man, like his father."

"His uncle, Miss Gladys," corrected Joan; "Mr. Julian Brook couldn't have a son, seeing he was never married."

"Never married! how do you know?"

"No, Miss Gladys; and how I know a long story which wouldn't do for you to hear."

Gladys became possessed with an intense desire to hear it, and as she always had her way Joan had to yield.

"He was a great friend of the old Earl, your grandfather, Miss Gladys, and once he was engaged to your mamma."

Every bit of colour died out of the girl's face.

"Engaged to my mamma! Do you mean he jilted her, Joan?"

"Don't go to use that word, Miss Gladys; don't, my deary, you'll be sorry."

"But if they were engaged and didn't marry of course he jilted her."

"It wasn't that, Miss Gladys. Lady Violet loved your father, and though I heard from the very first the old Earl was bitterly opposed to it she ran away with him."

"Ran away! Do you mean that she eloped?"

"Just that, Miss Gladys."

"But why weren't they married openly?"

"They couldn't be. You see, Mr. Brook was engaged to Lady Violet—some say the wedding day was fixed."

Gladys buried her face in her hands—an awful shame overpowered her. She had heaped reproach and opprobrium on Julian Brook's head, but it seemed to her now he was sinned against, not sinning.

"How could she!" half-sobbed the girl, whose idea of honour was so strong; "oh! how could she!"

"I doubt she suffered, Miss Gladys. You know how short a time she lived after her marriage. I think she pined away."

"But she loved my father."

"She just worshipped him, Miss Gladys; but, you see, she had given up all the world for his love, and the sacrifice was too hard."

A long silence came. Many a tear dropped on the black dress Gladys was folding.

"I think I'm glad you told me, Joan. I shall never speak harshly of Mr. Brook again. Do you know I think if he had been alive and the offer of an allowance had come from him I must have taken it."

"Why, Miss Gladys?"

"Because it would have hurt him so to think of my mother's child in poverty. If Julian Brook were alive, Joan, I would have gone to him and told him I was sorry; but, of course, his nephew is quite a different thing."

"Of course, Miss Gladys," echoed Joan, meekly.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE is a secret in most lives, reader; some of them full of pain and sorrow, others less romantic and less thrilling, yet guarded with sacred care because their revelation would bring about a woful amount of humiliation for their owners.

Now, it was a secret of the latter class which was nourished in the matronly breast of Mrs. Pearson, mistress of the Gables. What her neighbours knew of her was that her husband had made a fortune in brewing, and retired to enjoy its proceeds.

It was whispered he had begun life very low down in the social scale, and that his money alone had induced the Hon. Mrs. Gerald Fane to marry him.

This much of the family history was public property, but no one within miles and miles of the Gables knew that the lady who wore silk and velvet, and gave herself airs and graces on the strength of having been an Honourable's widow, had commenced her career in a very small public-house in a very small town as barmaid.

This secret was the skeleton in Mrs. Pearson's cupboard. How she dreaded its being found out! How scrupulously she avoided all reference to her early years was astonishing! She never by any chance alluded to her life before her first marriage; indeed, as one of her friends once remarked (not in her presence, of course), to hear her talk you would have

imagined she had been born a matron, and even in her babyhood have rejoiced in the dignity of the Hon. Mrs. Fane.

The Gables, a picturesque old house, standing in large grounds, was situated at Kenton, a few miles from Bromley, a village of small and select number of inhabitants, among whom Mrs. Pearson desired to reign as queen. She was very far from accomplishing her wish.

True, many people visited her, but they declined to take her at her own valuation. Ladies came to her kettledrums and assisted at her garden fete, but they were wunt to ignore her in London, and never to chaperone her daughters.

Young men ate her dinners and drank her wines, but showed not the slightest desire to win her for a mother-in-law. There were five Miss Pearsons, all of them of an age to enter society.

Not one of the five had ever received an offer, and what was worse, not one of the five appeared to have the remotest chance of receiving one.

Things were in this plight when Mrs. Jewell's letter arrived. Mrs. Pearson showed it to her husband.

"Have her here, of course," was the old gentleman's prompt reply. "With the money we spend an extra mouth's no object. You can't let the poor child go roving about the world while we're plenty."

Mrs. Pearson wrote and invited Gladys; not in the least because she shared her husband's generous feelings, but because she fancied her neighbours were forgetting the aristocratic prestige of her first marriage, and would be greatly impressed with the Baronet's daughter.

"The Leighs are an excellent family," she told her daughter. "Although Gladys is poor, she, doubtless, has influential friends, whom it will benefit you to know."

The Misses Pearson did not take readily to the idea of a permanent visitor. They were so eagerly engaged in husband-hunting that they had no time to cultivate female friendships; and they had been brought up with such a worship for wealth that they hardly understood how their mother could care to acknowledge a poor relative.

"Not that she's any cousin of ours really," sniffed Letitia, the eldest and plainest of the virgins. "What was her mother like, ma?"

"She was a child when I knew her. Lady Violet could not have been more than eleven when your father married me."

"But, I suppose, you spent a good deal of time at her house? Her father must have been your uncle."

"I never went to the Earl's, my dear."

"Why not?"

The truth was the proud old noble had refused to receive the *ci-devant* barmaid, but Mrs. Pearson could not confide this to her brood.

"Well, he was but in poor circumstances, and did not entertain much."

Letitia shrugged her shoulders.

"And yet you are expected to keep his grandchild. I shall take care to let Miss Leigh know what I think of her."

"We can make her useful," said Matilda, Mrs. Pearson's second joy. "Of course, if she's a poor relation she'll have to turn her hand to anything. I wish you'd let her teach the children, ma; it's horrid having that Miss Brown in the house, always throwing the grandees she's lived with in your teeth."

"I hope she won't attract Lord Fanshaw," said Alice, a little doubtfully. "It would be too bad if she carried off the one good match of the neighbourhood under our very eyes."

"Why, I don't think there's much chance of our carrying him off," said Janet, who was the youngest Miss Pearson professedly "out," and whose tongue was remarkably frank. "He's been at the Castle six weeks, and declined every invitation we've sent him."

Mrs. Pearson ordered a very pretty room to

be got ready for Miss Leigh, and herself drove to Bromley station to meet her.

Very few people came by that train, and only one young lady—a vision of radiant beauty, attired in the deepest mourning.

The barmaid's heart sank when she saw her destined guest. She felt as if she had been a traitress to her daughters.

"My dear, I'm delighted to see you! You're just like your dear mother—the sweetest creature she was!"

Gladys trembled; one would have said she shivered, in spite of the glad summer sunshine. Was this her kinswoman? Was this over-dressed, vulgar, loud-voiced woman indeed the relation on whose kindness she had elected to depend?

"Come along," said Mrs. Pearson, cheerfully; "the carriage is waiting, and the 'osses are a bit fresh."

It was a luxurious carriage, drawn by a pair of gallant greys, the coachman and footman were in elegant livery; but yet Gladys would rather have seen a humble donkey-cart, had its owner only been a gentleman.

"You'll have a real good time with us," said Mrs. Pearson, kindly. "I'm not one who 'olds with moping; I never did; I like young folks to have their fun. I've gals of my own much about your own age, my dear, and I'm sure you'll soon feel 'appy and at 'ome."

"Never!" was the response of her listener's heart; but Gladys roused herself to murmur some words of thanks for Mrs. Pearson's kindness.

"Well, I daresay, it's not many men so liberal as Pearson," returned the brewer's better half, with calm self-complacency. "That man's a 'art of gold. The moment I showed him your letter he said, 'Tell her to come straight off,' and I wrote to you without a word to the gals."

It dawned on Gladys very slowly that Mr. and Mrs. Pearson would be kind to her; that, if vulgar and uneducated, they still had generous hearts; but she fancied the "gals" would resent her coming. They had, she imagined, more outside polish than their parents, and less sterling kindness.

She felt quite sure of this when she had been introduced to them. Their handshake was not ready, their welcome very cold, and when Letitia was told to show her cousin upstairs she point-blank refused.

"She's not my cousin," said this young lady, determinedly, "and if she was I wouldn't wait on her. I shall be mistress of the Gables some day, and she's a pauper, without a shilling in her pocket. Why should I trouble about her?"

Gladys felt her cheeks burn. She was conscious that Mrs. Pearson began a confused apology. She did not hear a word of it; she only knew that Janet, the youngest daughter present, got up at once.

"Come along, Gladys," she said, good-naturedly. "I'll show the way; I'm not a bit tired."

The kindness went straight to the orphan's heart; the tears Letitia's taunts had failed to bring now trembled in her eyes.

"Now don't," said Janet, kindly, when they were in the pretty room allotted to Miss Leigh; "you'll only spoil your eyes. Why, bless me! father and mother could have half-a-dozen cousins to live here without our being the poorer, and as to Lettie—"

"It was quite true," interrupted Gladys, wearily; "I am a beggar, I know it quite well, only it hurts me."

"You mustn't mind a word that Lettie says; she's downright nasty to me sometimes, but I never think about it. You see, she's eight-and-twenty."

Gladys wondered dimly whether people were always afflicted with tempers when they reached this special age. Perhaps the question was written on her face, for Janet explained.

"She's eight-and-twenty, and she's never had an offer in her life. She's got sharper and sharper every year; and now that, I suppose,

she knows she's got no chance left she's positively horrid."

"No chance of what, Janet?"

It was Janet's turn to stare now.

"No chance of being married; goodness me! don't you understand? If no man proposes to a girl she can't be married, and Letitia's an old maid just for certain, though she tries not to believe it."

"I thought people married because they fell in love," said Gladys, in a bewildered tone.

"That notion's exploded long ago; wherever can you have lived, Gladys?"

"In the country," answered Miss Leigh, quietly; "but then why do people marry?"

"Because it's the proper thing to do. It's like running a race and never winning a prize, Gladys, for a girl to be in society year after year, and never have a chance of changing her name."

"And do they mind?"

"Mind!"—Janet began to think her new acquaintance very innocent or else profoundly stupid—"of course they mind; it *sours* them. You see, they think they're failures, and no one likes to fail. Why, I shouldn't wonder if I were as sour as Letitia in many years' time if I am still Janet Pearson. Surely you want to be married yourself?"

"I never thought about it."

"You never thought about it?"

"You see I had, papa."

"Well, I've got a father, too, but I can't say the fact has prevented my thinking of matrimony. Mother has promised her diamond ring to whichever of us four girls is engaged first."

"And do you want to get it?"

"Yes," said Janet, frankly, "I do. It would be such a triumph over the others."

"And have you fixed on anyone?" asked Gladys, still with that bewildered expression on her face.

Janet shook her head.

"Mother invites all the eligible young men here; and most of them come, but though they are very agreeable they have never asked papa to give them one of his daughters. Lettie meant to marry Lord Fanshaw, but she'd be content with someone much humbler now."

"Who is Lord Fanshaw?"

"He is the best match in the county. He has travelled half over the globe, and hardly ever stays a month together in the same place. Just now he has been six weeks at the Castle, and we all wonder why; but as we've none of us set eyes upon him we can't flatter ourselves one of us is the attraction."

By this time Gladys had taken off her hat and smoothed back the waves of her bright hair.

Janet looked at her admiringly.

"I think you're prettier than anyone I ever saw," was her outspoken comment, "and you've such a quiet manner; I suppose because your father was a baronet. You see, my dear Gladys, we are obliged to go through the world on the defensive, ready to convince anyone who doubts it that we are young ladies. Now probably you've had the fact of your young ladyhood taken for granted all your life, and haven't been obliged to assume a martial air."

"I never knew anyone."

"You don't mean it?"

"Until the day before papa's death I had never spoken to a single stranger, and no visitor had ever entered our house."

"It must have been like being buried alive, just as bad as a convent."

"It was very happy."

"And the girls are counting so on your introducing them to some of your grand friends, I do believe Alice and mother believe you'll be able to provide us with a titled husband a piece."

Gladys blushed.

"I wish I could."

"And you actually mean you know nobody—nobody at all?"

"There were our two servants, and the vil-



["YOU HAVE ONE FRIEND," SAID A DEEP, MANLY VOICE, "EVEN THOUGH YOU HAVE BROKEN YOUR PROMISE."]

lage doctor and his wife, and one other person."

"Who was the other person?" asked Janet.

"A young man."

The eyes of the fourth Miss Pearson brightened visibly at the reply.

"How old is he? What is he? Would he do for any of us?"

"Do for—what do you mean?"

"Does he require a wife?"

"Oh, no. I think he is married, but I'm not sure. He was papa's lawyer."

"Take my advice," counselled Janet, sagely, "and don't tell mother and the girls; let them go on believing in your titled friends just a little longer."

But, alas! such cross-questioning fell to Miss Leigh's lot that that very night she had to confess the truth.

Janet was very loyal, and stuck to Gladys in spite of all, but the three elder sisters were irate, and it was painfully evident to the orphan, Cousin Sophia (Mrs. Pearson preferred their style of address to be called aunt) considered she had come to the Gables under false pretences.

A month slipped by until it seemed a year to Gladys since she had left Arle. A hundred times she had been tempted to repent her refusal of her adversary's offer—a hundred times she had felt it would have been less bitter to accept the charity of the new master of the Priory than to eat the bread of dependence as meted out to her at the Gables.

It was not that they treated her as a dependent—a very pretty room, the daintiest of food, a proper amount of attendance from the servants, all this was given her as freely as though she had been a Miss Pearson; but mother and daughters showed her plainly they had no iota of regard for her.

She had come to them, they would not cast her out, but they would let her see they did not want her.

It was as though a barrier stood erect between Gladys and her kindred. They knew she was ten times more attractive than they were, and they hated her for it. They taunted her with noble birth and poverty being glad to share their low-born prosperity; they made her life such a weariness to her that but for Janet's sympathy her heart must have broken.

"I cannot bear it," she moaned, in her anguish, one sweet summer evening when she had broken away from her tormentors, and wandered alone in the grounds. Janet and her mother were absent, the household remained under Letitia's guidance, and poor Gladys was goaded almost past bearing by the cruel behaviour of the spinster. "I cannot bear it," came from the girl's pent-up heart. "Oh Heaven! be merciful and take me to my mother!"

Her bitter sobs alone broke the stillness of the evening air. She had strayed a long way from the house, and all unwittingly had left her aunt's grounds behind her, and stood in the shrubbery which led to Fanshaw Castle.

The last rays of the setting sun fell on her sweet face and gave a golden radiance to her hair. She had no thought of the future she formed; she was lost to all thought but her troubles, she never heeded the sound of footsteps, she never knew she was no longer alone, she just stood there with one white hand shading her eyes. Her thoughts fled back to the sweet, tranquil shades of the Priory gardens.

"I shall never be happy again," was the lament that came from the girl's full heart. "Oh! if only I had never come here—here where I have not a single friend!"

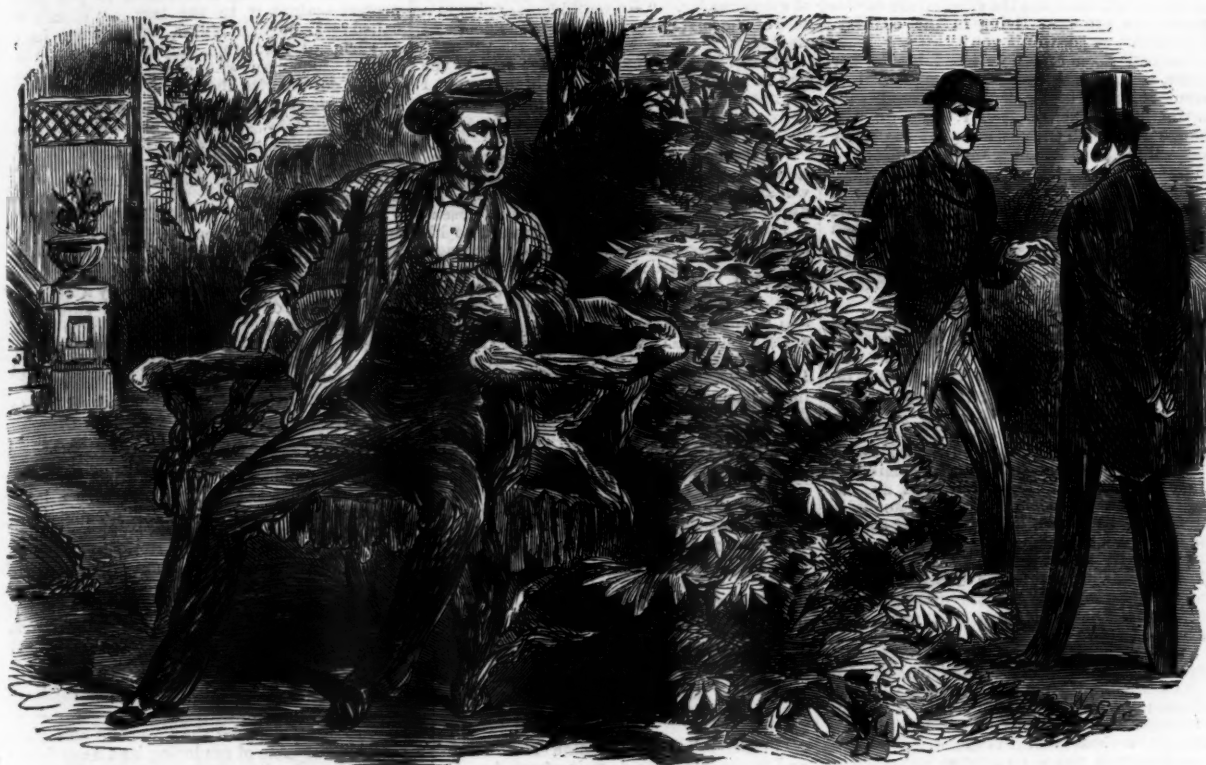
"You have one friend," said a deep, manly voice, "even though you have broken your promise. I begged you to summon me, Miss Leigh, if ever you were in trouble. I can see the sorrow has come. Why did you not send for me?"

No need for her to look up; she knew that voice too well. No other sounded so sweetly to her ears, but how had Mr. Lorraine discovered her abode? and what was he doing in these lonely grounds so late in the evening?

(To be continued.)

THE way to wealth is as plain as the way to market. It depends chiefly on two words, industry and frugality; that is, waste neither time nor money, but make the best use of both. Without industry and frugality, nothing will do, and with them, everything.

HOW TO MAKE A BED.—Let every bed-maker, as soon as the covers are spread, turn down the upper sheet, and all above it, leaving a generous margin below the bolster. Some people, you know, pull all the covers straight up to the top, and lay the bolster upon them, so that when bedtime comes the bed must be rearranged at the head. Boys don't like this way, and perhaps some other folks don't, either. It is the custom to pile two big square pillows on top of the bolster, and then put on two pillow shams, and then, sometimes, or perhaps before the pillow shams, a sheet sham. This is setting a trap for the unwary. Only a remarkably careful woman is equal to the task of getting off all the "finery" properly. Why not almost, if not altogether, abolish shams of all kinds? Why not honestly take off the big square pillows, and supply every bed with a comfortable bolster to take the place of pillows? If you like adornment, embroider or decorate the slips and sheets themselves, without any make-believe. Silk, lace, and the like, seem out of place on a bed, which should suggest repose. Imagine a big boy with boots on flinging himself into the midst of a fairy creation of pink, satin, and tulle! Let beds be what they look like, and let them look like what they are—real resting-places.



[“MONSTERS,” GASPED DIMPLEY, BENEATH HIS BREATH.]

NOVELLETTE.]

LABURNUM VILLA.

CHAPTER I.

It was Mrs. Dimpley's fault that they ever took it. Dimpley has always stuck manfully to this assertion, in spite of many remonstrances and protests. But for his wife's soaring ambition he would have continued to live over the shop, as his father and grandfather—worthy men—had done before him.

Robert Dimpley, or Bob, to use the privilege of a familiar acquaintance, was a chemist, carrying on business in the Brompton-road. His shop was a large and old-established one, well-known to the faculty, whose prescriptions as announced in gold letters over the door were carefully made up there.

The chemist had only two children, a son and daughter.

Cis Dimpley, the son, who—in accordance with the process of social evolution going on all around us—was intended to fill a higher place in the world than his father, to begin where that gentleman had left off, was a medical student at St. Thomas's Hospital.

A wilder and more racketty young man it would have been hard to find—not that he was absolutely vicious, or incapable of one day developing into a useful member of society. But high animal spirits, splendid health, and easy means were so many inducements, in his opinion, to enjoy life after his own fashion, which certainly had not been that of his father before him.

Old Dimpley rated Cis, and threatened to stop his allowance if he didn't mend his ways. Mrs. Dimpley wept over him, Susie as a rule took his part. She idolised her brother and his escapades; his doings his companions, were for her, poor child, full of interest. They gave zest to what was otherwise a very dull life for a young girl fresh from school.

The thoughts of Dimpley *père* were diverted at length from his son's anything but satisfactory career by what might be called a domestic rebellion on the part of Mrs. Dimpley.

That lady, who had long sighed for a suburban villa, as being so very genteel, and quite the correct thing for people in their position, assumed the imperative mood when Dimpley turned a deaf ear to her request, and declared that she neither could nor would continue to occupy part of the business premises, when everyone she knew had long since retired to the suburbs.

“It's meanness, that's what it is, Dimpley,” she exclaimed vehemently, one Sunday afternoon when the family were assembled in the best sitting-room, dessert being still on the table.

She knew her husband was longing for his Sunday “snooze,” and she didn't mean him to have it till she had carried her point, which made her unusually sharp and self-asserting.

“If you are indifferent to my health and comfort you might take your child's prospects into consideration, Robert,” she continued reproachfully. “How can we entertain society in this place I should like to know? What is the use of Susie being ‘out’ when she never goes anywhere? No one worth knowing would care to visit a family living in the Brompton-road. But once established in a charming suburban villa, away from the business, we should soon get a nice little circle of acquaintances round us. You can't plead poverty as an excuse for keeping us here, for you're doing better now than you ever were; and it must be stinginess. I've made my mind up not to stay here all the summer among vulgar, horrid sights and sounds, and it will be very cruel of you to go against me. If you're so wedded to the shop you must stay here by yourself, and pay us an occasional visit.”

“Hoighty, toighty!” ejaculated Mrs.

Dimpley; “then you're going to sue for a separation, Matilda?”

“No, only a semi-detached villa,” rejoined his wife with a smile, putting her arm round his neck as she spoke. She was a tall, fair, comely woman of forty, very fond of her husband. Indeed, but for that bone of contention, the suburban villa, the relations between them would have been perfectly harmonious.

“Why can't you be content to go on here?” he urged fretfully, running his hands through his fluffy brown hair. His wife had the advantage of Dimpley both in personal appearance and disposition; the chemist being a dumpy little man, with a chubby meaningless face, and a fussy, suspicious, inquisitive nature. Moreover, he was fond of practising small economies hardly in keeping with his large receipts.

“My father never wanted anything better than these rooms, or my mother either,” he said snappishly. “What was good enough for them ought to be good enough for us, Matilda. I like to live on the premises, and keep the business always under my eye. It might go to the dogs if I left it and went to live in the suburbs.”

“Hardly that,” replied Mrs. Dimpley, persuasively. “To a certain extent, Robert, one must go with the times, and they are altered since your parents lived here in our stead. Then it was not the custom for well-to-do tradesmen to live away from their business—now it is. If you persist in being different to your neighbours they will think you cannot afford to take a villa.”

This was touching Dimpley upon a weak point. He had no wish to be thought poor, much as he disliked spending money.

“I'll see about it,” he replied with a groan. “Susie,” addressing his daughter, who was seated at the piano, “I suppose you, too, are in favour of this confounded villa?”

“Oh! papa, it would be delightful,” cried

the girl enthusiastically. "I—I don't like the Brompton-road and the suburbs are so nice almost the same as living in the country. You will let us go, won't you?"

She had risen and now stood beside her father, a tall, dark-eyed, dark-haired girl of seventeen, fresh and dewy as a rosebud, with an instinctive yearning for pleasure and change and fresh experiences that made her very willing to endorse her mother's plan.

Granted proper training and tuition, Susie Dimpley might some day expand into a gloriously beautiful woman, commanding universal homage, gifted both in mind and body. At present, however, she was but a crude, unfurnished girl, whose education and surroundings were not in favour of any further development.

A few superficial accomplishments gained at a boarding-school were all she possessed. Of solid mental education and culture she had very little, although her quick, active, mind, craving for knowledge, gladly assimilated any fresh truths or stray scraps of information that came in her way.

The elder Dimpleys were on a level with the ordinary British Philistine belonging to the middle classes. They lived well, dressed well, and that was about all. Their acquaintance with literature did not extend beyond the daily paper and the three-volume novel. With regard to art they had the coloured illustrations issued with the *Graphic*, framed and hung up in the best sitting-room, and portrait of friends and relatives, interesting to none save themselves.

Just as an oyster occasionally produces a pearl, so this extremely commonplace father and mother had given birth to a child who, relatively speaking, was to them what the precious stone is to the edible but humble mollusc in whose shell it is found.

"Of course, you are ready to uphold your mother in any suggestion, no matter how unreasonable!" grumbled Mr. Dimpley. But he gazed upon his lovely young daughter with pardonable paternal pride even while he scolded her. "I shall catch my death of cold in the winter time, going to and fro between this precious villa and the business! Of course, that won't matter, providing you get your own way! Do as you like, do as you like! Take a villa to-morrow; only be prepared for the consequences, and my speedy departure from the stage of life. Matilda!" sitting bolt upright, with a rapid change from pathos to the practical, "don't you run me in more than sixty pounds a year, including rates and taxes, because I won't stand it!"

"Very well, dear," acquiesced Mrs. Dimpley, soothingly. Having got her own way thus far, she could afford to make some concessions. "Susie and I will go out to-morrow morning," she continued, "and commence our search for a suitable house. I'm quite sure it won't take us long to find one."

"A red-brick villa built in the old English style would be charming, papa!" interposed Susie, eagerly.

"No it wouldn't!" snapped Dimpley. "I detest the old English style! Windows that admit no light, and doorways that a tall man can't pass through without hitting his head. Of what use are advanced civilization and modern improvements if we are to fall back upon the bungling methods of a bygone age? It's what I call getting along backwards, missie!"

"But it's so æsthetic, papa!"

"Never mind, comfort ought to come before elegance, and so it will while I remain paymaster. You and your mother may look out for a modern house with 'cant' windows and good sanitary arrangements. I'll have nothing to do with the mid-devil style of architecture."

"Of course, we must keep two servants, Robert," said Mrs. Dimpley. "We do that now, you know."

"Very well."

"And what do you say to a boy in buttons?" inquired that lady, timidly, following

up the advantage she had gained, yet fearful of going too far. "He would look so nice in a sort of chocolate livery to answer the door and wait at table."

What Mr. Dimpley might have said to the boy in buttons had that youth been present I cannot tell. What he did say to his wife for suggesting such an innovation was something strong.

"What next, I should like to know? Why, he'd break more in a week than his wages would amount to in a year!" said the indignant husband and father. At the close of a long and fiery peroration addressed to his small audience, who listened meekly enough,

"If I were to listen to you I should be ruined, Matilda! Give a woman an inch, and she wants an ell at once. Now I'm going to sleep, and I hope this subject won't be renewed again to-day. You may have the villa and two women servants, but, at my time of life, I'm not going to turn over a new leaf by keeping a page, or anything in the shape of a male domestic."

In blissful ignorance of the bull he had made, Mr. Dimpley threw his silk handkerchief over his face, and composed himself for a nap.

His wife and daughter retired to the other end of the room to discuss their victory.

"If we could only have got papa to consent to this page," said Mrs. Dimpley, regretfully, as the chocolate-coloured livery fitted tantalizingly before her mind's eye.

"Never mind, mamma!" rejoined Susie, consolingly. "Think how nice it will be to get away from the Brompton-road, and to know some really nice people. Now that papa has given his consent to the removal, the sooner we are established in our new home the better!"

On the following morning Mrs. Dimpley and Susie commenced their search for a suitable villa residence.

They invited Cis to accompany them, but that young gentleman, with a wisdom and foresight beyond his years, promptly declined.

"I'll come and see the new diggings when you have decided upon them, mater," he said, in response to his mother's appeal. "House-hunting is no end of a bore, and I shouldn't be of the least use to you."

Accordingly Mrs. Dimpley and her daughter went alone on their voyage of discovery.

It lasted several days, and furnished them with a number of painfully-acquired experiences. The hollow deceptions practised by wily house-agents upon would-be tenants; the villas that looked large and imposing from outside, but were so small and pokey within; the villas that were nice, but situated much too far from the Dimpleys' place of business for the senior member to get to and fro every day; with all these Susie and her mother had to become acquainted.

"Prospect! Villas are the worst of all," Mrs. Dimpley observed, mournfully, on the third day of their search. "They've invariably got a blank wall at the back, while the front windows command an extensive view of the opposite houses. I'm tired out, and yet I don't wish to go home this evening till we have decided upon something, Susie. Your father looks so aggravatingly delighted to see us return fatigued and unsuccessful day after day. We'll get some light refreshment at the nearest confectioner's, and then go over that house in Langham-gardens again. It's more likely to suit us than any other."

After many pilgrimages had been made, and lengthy consultations with house-agents had taken place, the Dimpleys finally decided upon a semi-detached villa at Willesden, a pretty house in the modern style, with a garden back and front, and a thatched summer-house, the latter looking not unlike an overgrown mushroom.

It was in tolerably good condition, and Mr. Dimpley could find but little to grumble at when his wife and daughter triumphantly escorted him over it.

"There's nothing large about it but the

rent," he observed, determined to put in a protest against it to the last. "What's it called? Laburnum Villa. Why, there isn't a sprig of laburnum anywhere about the place! The man who christened this house hadn't got his wits about him, that's very evident. I wonder who our new neighbours are?"

"The house-agent said it was a Mr. Landon and his sister at Myrtle Villa," interposed Mrs. Dimpley, "and a Mr. Bartholomew Brownlow, a bachelor, at Rose Lodge, on the other side."

"Myrtle Villa and Rose Lodge!" ejaculated her husband. "Then each house has a separate name. I wonder how that poor devil, the postman, contrives to remember them all. The one in this district must carry a copy of the language of flowers with him surely, or he'd never do it. Well, I suppose, now we've taken the house, the next thing is to move in. I hope half the furniture won't get damaged in the transit."

"I shall write to Aunt Jane, and get her to help us with the moving," said Mrs. Dimpley as they went downstairs. "It will be a little change for her to come to town, and we shall find her very useful."

Aunt Jane, an elderly spinster with a large nose, rather prominent grey eyes, and a big bunch of grey curls arranged on either side of her face, accepted the invitation, and came up to town from the country, where she lived, to help the Dimpleys move.

She was a good, useful soul, but too frank and plain-spoken, too grim and dogmatic, to be invited by genteel Mrs. Dimpley, except when her services were really required.

In times of sickness, trouble, or, as in the present case, removal, she was invaluable, however. Her family bore with her numerous idiosyncrasies rather than lose the assistance she was capable of rendering, and Aunt Jane's arrival in the Brompton-road was the signal for the removing to commence in desperate earnest.

CHAPTER II.

It took the Dimpleys more than a week to establish themselves comfortably in their new home. During that time Mr. Dimpley had to endure the inevitable miseries connected with a removal—the "scratches" dinners, the rooms turned upside down, the discomforting sense of being unsettled and generally out of sorts.

His temper suffered considerably, although his womankind, to do them justice, while working hard to get Laburnum Villa in order, studied his comfort as much as circumstances would permit of their doing. But Dimpley had made his mind up to be a martyr, and he clung persistently to the rôle, alternately grumbling and protesting against the new arrangement.

Aunt Jane was a host in herself. With her assistance Mrs. Dimpley, Susie, and the two maid-servants soon evolved order from chaos as the furniture arrived. They were happy enough putting down carpets and putting up blinds and curtains. Makeshift meals, workmen coming and going, changed surroundings, were rather enjoyable to them than otherwise.

It was only that disagreeable old Dimpley who sulked or scolded, although he had none of the hard work to do.

Going over one evening to see how they were progressing, he would insist on putting up the "roller" blinds himself, and mounted the steps for that purpose.

Experience goes to prove that the putting up of "roller" blinds generally leads to an altercation between the person standing on the steps arranging them, and the one stationed below to see that they hang straight. They are sure to have a few words, followed by a brief interval when they are not on speaking terms with each other.

"They're not straight, Robert," said Mrs. Dimpley, plaintively. "You'd much better let the carpenter's man put them up. I'm

sure the blinds must look dreadful from outside."

"Carpenter's man be hanged!" retorted her consort, irascibly. "Allow me to tell you, Matilda, that I put blinds up before he was born. A little more to one side—just another tack, and—"

"Oh! goodness gracious, Robert! are you hurt?"

In throwing his head back to survey his handiwork, Mr. Dimpley had overbalanced the light steps. He made a speedy acquaintance with the floor, the steps falling on top of him.

"It wouldn't have happened but for your interference," he replied, viciously, gathering himself up just as Susie and Aunt Jane, attracted by the noise he had made in falling, entered the room. "No, I'm not hurt," in answer to anxious inquiries, "but I might have been, though. I defy anyone to say those blinds are not straight."

"They'll do," said Aunt Jane, reassuringly, with an aside to her sister-in-law of, "we can alter them when he is gone, you know, Matilda."

Refusing to trust himself upon the treacherous steps again, Mr. Dimpley retired in high dudgeon to the back garden.

It was in a very weedy condition, and Dimpley, with an eye to economy and saving the hire of a gardener, took off his coat and commenced weeding it, selecting the large flower-bed in the centre upon which to operate first.

Weeding is warm work, especially when you happen to be stout and elderly.

By the time Mr. Dimpley had accumulated a respectable heap of what he accounted "rubbiash weed," his back ached terribly. He stopped to wipe his red face and take a rest.

"Dear, dear, well, to be sure; what a pity!" ejaculated a thin, cracked voice from the other side of the low wall that divided his garden from that of Mr. Bartholomew Brownlow.

Dimpley turned sharply round to see old Mrs. Chirrup, Mr. Brownlow's housekeeper, regarding him with some amazement, as if his proceeding, far from being of an ordinary nature, in her opinion savoured strongly of lunacy.

"What do you mean?" inquired Dimpley, in a tone that was the reverse of amiable. "I suppose you were addressing your remarks to me?"

"Lor, yes. What 'ave you pulled 'em all up for? Them sunflowers would have been six feet high in a month or two, with flowers as big as soup plates. And the garden poppies, too, are uncommon pretty when they bloom. Are you going to turn it into a kitchen garden, sir?"

"No," said Dimpley, aghast. "Do you mean to say those green things," pointing to the unlucky sunflowers and garden poppies lying prone on the ground, "are not weeds?"

"Of course they're not," rejoined Mrs. Chirrup, leaning her bony arms on the wall, and indulging in a laugh that made Dimpley feel murderous towards her. "You don't know much about gardening, sir, or you wouldn't have pulled 'em up. The last tenant set no end of store by them. He was always a bringing visitors out in the garden to look at his sunflowers."

"Perhaps I can plant them again," said Dimpley, despairingly, wishing too late that he had entrusted the garden to someone who understood its contents better than he did himself.

"If you do they won't grow," replied the Job's comforter on the other side of the wall. "They're only fit for the rubbish heap now."

"Oh, papa, what a pity!" exclaimed Susie, almost in tears, stooping down to examine the plants. "And sunflowers are so lovely. I wish you hadn't inter—I mean hadn't troubled yourself about the garden."

"No one but an æsthetic idiot would call them lovely," said Dimpley, resuming his coat and preparing to beat a retreat. "Great

brazen-looking things that remind you of the yellow jaundice every time you look at them. You may get on the best way you know how; I shan't come out to help you again, since all that I do is declared to be wrong."

But, in spite of this cruel deprivation, Mr. Dimpley's family finally got things in order, and settled down very contentedly in their new home.

"It's quite a picture," said Aunt Jane, surveying the drawing-room through her spectacles, a feather-brush in one hand, and a duster in the other. "You never had such a genteel drawing-room before, Matilda."

Mrs. Dimpley admitted as much, but Susie remained silent. The girl was not wholly devoid of artistic instincts, although they had not been cultivated. She knew there was something wrong with the room that her aunt and mother praised so highly, yet she would have been puzzled to define its most glaring defects even while she was dimly conscious of them.

The Dimpleys drawing-room can be seen any day multiplied by thousands throughout England in the houses of the well-to-do but uncultured middle-classes.

A massive gilt mirror reflecting its owner's want of good taste hung over the mantelpiece, a bright green carpet with big bunches of flowers strewn over it covered the floor; the chairs were mostly swaddled in stiff white antimacassars that slid off aggravatingly at a touch; the centre table was covered with gaudily bound books, not meant for reading; the piano, always kept locked when not in active service, smelt of varnish; while the pictures on the walls seemed doing their best to kill each other, so far as colour went—an incongruous, awful room that would have given a disciple of Oscar Wilde brain fever had he been compelled to pass a day within it.

Susie sighed over its faults without being able to amend them. The elder members of the family, however, could detect nothing wrong. Cis, more outspoken, ground his teeth, and indulged in disparaging remarks, which his father pooh-poohed. The brother and sister, in their desire for reformation, were outvoted by an overwhelming majority.

When the Dimpleys had leisure to turn their attention to their near neighbours, they declared the Landon to be proud and exclusive, since they held aloof and made no friendly overtures. Mr. Bartholomew Brownlow, on the other hand, speedily became acquainted with the new tenants.

He was a tall, gaunt, elderly, man with a skin like parchment, and thick black eyebrows almost meeting over his nose. His eyes were small and cavernous, his voice nasal in its accent.

He was always scrupulously well-dressed, and everything pertaining to him bore the hall-mark of solid, affluent respectability.

He struck up a conversation with Dimpley, when the two were smoking in their respective back-gardens.

He described himself as a stationer retired from business. Being a widower without any near relations, Mr. Brownlow observed pathetically that time frequently hung heavy upon his hands.

Wealth and respectability were the idols before which old Dimpley prostrated himself. Talent and worth were, in his estimation, only entitled to rank as secondary considerations. Chemists and stationers forming, as it were, the aristocracy of trade, Dimpley felt happy in having one belonging to his own order so close at hand.

He challenged Mr. Brownlow to a friendly game of whist. The first invitation led to others, until the retired stationer got into the habit of spending nearly all his evenings with the Dimpleys, much to the annoyance of Cis and Susie.

Cis thought Brownlow a cad, Susie entertained a special aversion for him. His nasal voice and twinkling black eyes, his little formal speeches, that had something horribly

unctuous about them, inspired her with profound disgust.

She avoided him as much as possible, but his frequent visits threw them together far more than Susie approved of. To make the matter worse Mr. Brownlow was fond of paying her little attentions, of evincing a staid, elderly gallantry that rendered him doubly obnoxious.

She dared not snub him openly for fear of displeasing her father, who had conceived quite a strong liking for the ex-stationer. She did her best to keep him at arm's length, however; while Cis, with less dread of the paternal displeasure to keep him in check, never lost an opportunity of administering an unpleasant rub or a decided repulse to Mr. Bartholomew Brownlow.

Whatever he may have thought of the young man's impertinence and evident dislike the stationer never resented either, or permitted them to curtail his visits. He remained as bland, as imperturbable as ever, thereby aggravating Cis—whose belligerent attitude towards himself he quietly ignored—beyond all endurance.

Susie was the first member of the Dimpley family to become acquainted with the Landon. A dove belonging to Grace Landon escaped from its wicker cage one day, and flew over into the Dimpleys' garden. Susie captured the soft, fluttering, frightened thing, at a loss to know how to avail itself of the liberty for which it had pined, and ran up the steps of the next house with the dove in her hands.

Grace Landon, who had discovered that one of her two pets was missing, saw the girl coming, and herself opened the door.

She was a slender, graceful woman of two-and-twenty, with wavy brown hair and large, soft eyes the colour of an agate. Her manner displayed the ease and finish, the quiet good-breeding, in which Susie knew herself to be greatly lacking.

"How kind of you to bring my runaway back," she said, pleasantly, taking the bird from Susie, and stroking its soft plumage. "The door of the cage must have flown open without my being aware of it. I should have been so sorry to lose Queenie. Won't you come in?" she continued, leading the way into the little drawing-room. "We ought to become more acquainted with each other since we are such near neighbours."

"I thought perhaps, that is, I fancied you might not wish to know us," stammered Susie, shyly, looking round the pretty room, and mentally acknowledging the superiority of culture and intellect to which it bore witness.

The handsome furniture it contained conveyed no painful sense of newness; the prevailing tints were cool, reposeful, and artistic. There were a few choice engravings on the walls, and some carved brackets supporting statuettes of Venus, Ariel, and a Greek dancing girl. A dwarf bookcase ran round two sides of the room, upon the top of which were ranged rare bits of old china, genuine Wedgwood, and Dresden. Little occasional tables, littered with books, and needwork, and flowers, gave a pleasant, homely aspect to the room; while dainty squares of silk and lace hung over the chairs and sofas in lieu of the crocheted abominations so dear to Mrs. Dimpley's heart. Grace's piano stood open, and her brother's violin was beside it.

"Why should you think that?" asked Grace, regarding her visitor with an amused smile. This pretty, naive girl must be well worth knowing she considered. "My brother and I do not make many acquaintances, it is true," she continued; "but we are not so exclusive or so unneighbourly as you imagine, Miss Dimpley. When I have seen you in the garden I have frequently wished that we were on speaking terms."

"I should so much like to establish a degree of intimacy between us," said Susie, gathering courage, and surveying Grace Landon with frank, undisguised admiration as she spoke. "It is rather dull at home with only mamma

and Aunt Jane. We haven't got fairly into society yet, you know, although, I daresay, we shall do so eventually. Mr. Brownlow visits us, but I detest him. He is such a ha— But, perhaps, he is a friend of yours?" breaking off abruptly, with a vivid blush.

Grace Landon laughed gently as she put her visitor into an easy chair.

"You mean the gentleman who lives at Rose Lodge?" she said, interrogatively. "No, he is not a friend of ours. We know nothing of him whatever."

"Then you are fortunate," rejoined Susie, candidly. "He is not a desirable acquaintance. I wish papa would not invite him so often. I shall mind it less, though, if I may sometimes come in to chat with you."

"I shall be glad to have you," said Grace, kindly, "if your mamma does not object. I am frequently alone, although time never hangs heavy on my hands. I am always fully employed."

"What a very pretty room yours is!" Susie observed presently, when she had given Grace a *résumé* of the family history, including the removal from the Brompton-road, and a graphic description of Cis. "I wish ours resembled it a little more. We've gone in for too much paint and gilding. Miss Landon, any benefit arising from our acquaintance will be on my side, I am quite sure of that. There are so many things of which I am ignorant, and with which you seem to be so well acquainted."

"You queer child," laughed Grace. "If in our intercourse I can teach you anything I shall be pleased to do so. Let us hope the benefit will be mutual. No, you must not go yet. My brother is coming, and I want to introduce you to him."

Susie's shyness returned when Maurice Landon joined them. The tall, broad-shouldered young man, with regular features, large handsome grey eyes, and drooping brown moustache, appeared to her a somewhat formidable, yet not altogether unpleasant, addition.

His easy, unembarrassed manner soon produced a corresponding one in Susie. He drew her out even more than his sister had done, till Susie felt surprised at the hitherto unknown extent of her own conversational powers. For the first time in her life she had come in contact with keen, vigorous, well-trained intellects, and her own unconsciously responded to them. The mental friction had struck out sparks by the light of which her customary surroundings seemed dark indeed.

Mrs. Dimpley was full of curiosity about the new acquaintances that her daughter had made. Mr. Dimpley was inclined to regard them with suspicion.

"We don't know who or what they are," he said, dubiously. "They may be respectable, or the reverse. Give me Brownlow. He is all on the surface—fair and square; there's not the slightest mystery about him."

CHAPTER III.

"You don't know what nice people they are next door at Myrtle Villa, Cis," Susie remarked to her brother one evening, when they happened to be alone. "Miss Landon is a delightful woman. I'm sure you would say so if you were introduced to her; and her brother, Maurice Landon—"

"Is he delightful also?" queried Cis, from the depths of the easy chair into which he had flung his well-dressed person.

"Don't be ridiculous!" retorted Susie; then, with all a sister's frankness, "he's much better looking than you, Cis, and far more clever. I wonder what profession he belongs to? It has never transpired in the course of conversation. That is one reason why papa dislikes him. He is so suspicious of people who display the least reserve with regard to their affairs. That horrid man, Mr. Brownlow, acquainted us with his before we had been here a week. I wish papa would

not invite him in here so often—he is simply detestable!"

"Perhaps you'd prefer an occasional visit from Maurice Landon?" said that incorrigible tease Cis, rising, and taking up his favourite position on the hearthrug. "How did you contrive to scrape acquaintance with these Landons, Sue, since they're not in the governor's good books?"

Susie told him of the escape of the pet dove, which had led to an introduction between Grace Landon and herself. She wound up with a glowing, eulogistic description of the Landon *ménage* as compared with their own, not forgetting to allude to Grace Landon's beauty and accomplishments, which, in her frank, girlish enthusiasm, Susie admired without any base feeling of envy.

"Must be worth knowing," remarked Cis, languidly, caressing his moustache.

A good-looking young fellow of medium height, he not unfrequently adopted a patronising air when women were in question, as if he had but to throw the handkerchief in order to be accepted—a fault from which young men in the aggregate are not free.

"I don't suppose she would care to know you," rejoined Susie, slightly nettled.

"Why not?"

"Because she is too clever and too highly educated to listen to the nonsense that you deem sufficiently good for a woman when you are talking to her."

"Look here, Sue, you're a little traitress. At one time you swore allegiance to me, your only brother. Now you've gone over to the Landon camp, and I'm simply nowhere in your estimation. I call that mean."

"You're a dear!" said Susie, relenting, and bestowing a kiss upon her brother, "only you shouldn't allude to Miss Landon in that superficial manner. When I get a chance I'll introduce you to her. She is very clever, and under her tuition I fancy that I am improving a little. We read together—the works of the best authors—and she helps me with my music. She says my taste wants forming, and she is doing her best to cultivate it. I know more of art and literature now than I ever did before!"

"I have noticed a decided improvement in you lately," rejoined Cis, regarding her curiously. "Does Mr. Landon ever take any part in these studies of yours?"

"Yes, sometimes," Susie acknowledged, with a tell-tall blush, "when he happens to be at home. They are not exactly studies, Cis; they consist chiefly of desultory readings and conversations, but in themselves they are a liberal education. I wish we knew more people like the Landons, and that papa were less prejudiced against them."

"As a rule, our acquaintance are of the shop, shoppy," rejoined Cis, with an air of disgust. "At least, the governor's are. I am not alluding to my own private and particular friends. Do you think Miss Landon would take me in hand, Susie, and bring her refining process to bear upon me?"

"She might, without intending it, teach you how to fall in love," said Susie, gravely, "and that would lead to complications."

"What if that particular branch of study were already mastered by me?"

"Cis! you don't mean to say you are actually in love?"

"Something very like it," rejoined Cis, trying hard not to look sheepish, as he made the admission. "If I take you into my confidence, Susie, promise that you will never round upon me, or let it all out as a good joke."

"Why, of course not; I wouldn't be so wicked," said Susie, breathlessly. "You may trust me, Cis."

"Well, it happened in this way. I was going down Oxford-street one morning, about three weeks ago, when a young lady made an attempt to cross just where the traffic was thickest. She had had one or two good opportunities to get over in perfect safety. Woman-like she had let them go by, and made a rush at the wrong moment. I saw her danger, and

darted after her, only just in time to prevent her from being run over by a hansom. As it was she grazed her foot, and I got an ugly blow on the shoulder from the shaft of an omnibus."

"Oh, Cis, what a narrow escape!"

"It was rather a close shave. The young lady was almost fainting when I got her back on to the pavement. I took her into a confectioner's, and a glass of wine soon brought her round. She thanked me far more than I deserved for the trifling service I had rendered her. I wanted to accompany her home, but she declared herself quite capable of going alone. She seemed reluctant to give her address, and we parted there and then, after she had again expressed her gratitude. I have been on the look-out for her ever since, but I have not once encountered her. We were only together for about half-an-hour, yet it was easy enough for me to fall in love with her. I can't get her out of my mind, Sue. I never cared for any woman in that way before. It will seem deuced hard lines if we are not to meet again."

"Poor old boy," said Susie, sympathetically. "Was she very pretty, Cis?"

"Awfully, and her manner was even more fascinating than her face. I'd give a year's allowance only to ascertain who she is."

"She may be married, you know," hazarded Susie.

"You shut up. I don't believe she's married," retorted Cis, savagely. "Perhaps Maurice Landon is."

"He isn't, but if he were it wouldn't matter to me," cried Susie, with the consciousness of having told an enormous fib.

A few days later she ran into the dining-room where Cis sat reading, her pretty face full of eager purpose.

"Cis, if you want to be introduced to Miss Landon you'd better come out," she said quickly. "She's in the garden now, and you are so seldom at home it would be a pity to miss the opportunity."

Cis followed his sister into the front garden, rake in hand, as if he merely contemplated doing a little gardening. He dropped the rake, however, as if it had burnt him on beholding the slim, graceful girl in cream-coloured canvas and a broad straw hat, who was weeding in a *dilettante* fashion on the other side of the low green paling.

"It is she!" he exclaimed in a tone expressive of intense delight, and no little surprise. "What an extraordinary coincidence!"

"Not the lady you saved from being run over, Cis?" cried Susie. "Surely it could not have been my Miss Landon."

"It was," rejoined Cis, advancing with praiseworthy alacrity towards Grace, who had already recognised in him her preserver.

"Miss Landon, this is Cis," explained Susie introducing them "anyhow" in her joyous confusion. "He says he has met you before, that he had no idea you were our near neighbour."

"Mr. Dimpley was the means of saving me from what might have been a very bad accident about three weeks ago," said Grace, shaking hands with the delighted Cis, while both grew rosy-red. "How strange that my preserver should prove to be your brother, Susie!"

"Very," interposed Susie, her dark eyes dancing with merriment. "He doesn't—"

"Want his sister to speak for him—that's quite right, Susie," after bestowing which effectual snub Cis turned once more to Grace Landon.

"I have wondered so many times," he said, softly, "whether you reached your home in safety that day. It was rather unkind of you, Miss Landon, to refuse me permission to accompany you after the fright you had sustained."

"Oh! I did not wish my brother to know how foolish I had been, and what a risk I had run," replied Grace, deprecatingly. "On that account I did not mention my narrow escape

even to Susie. I suppose it must transpire now, and I shall receive a scolding. Believe me, I am not ungrateful to you, Mr. Dimpley, for saving my life at the risk of your own."

"Don't mention it," said Cis, fervently. "I'd do the same thing again to have the pleasure of rescuing you at the end of it."

"Rather doubtful pleasure," laughed Grace, whose thoughts had frequently strayed back to the well-favoured young fellow who had rescued her from under the wheels of the hansom.

Susie, with a tact that made Cis think well of her, found some plants that required tying up, and left him to carry on the conversation with Grace Landon.

The weeding and hoeing didn't make much progress that afternoon.

Old Dimpley, away in the Brompton-road concocting blue pills and black draughts, had no idea of what was going on at home in his absence. Mrs. Dimpley and Aunt Jane were enjoying their siesta, and the young people had it all their own way.

"Well," said Cis, when Grace had gone indoors, and he had crossed the garden with a very satisfied face to inspect Susie's operations.

"Well," said the girl, drily, "I thought you would never stop talking. Isn't this a beautiful specimen of Love-lies-Bleeding, Cis?"

"Don't bother. You won't betray my confidence, Susie, when you and Miss Landon are together? Girl's tongues run on at such a rate that it's difficult to stop them sometimes."

"I'll be very discreet. I expect you will reveal your own secret before very long, Cis. You will be telling Miss Landon how you love her."

"That will depend upon circumstances. At any rate, I'm awfully glad to have found her."

"And I'm delighted that you should be in love with her of all people," said Susie, earnestly. "I only hope she will like you in return, Cis, and that papa will be agreeable. He can be very nasty occasionally, almost as nasty as his own physic."

"If she consents there's sure to be a dose of bitters in store for me from the governor," replied Cis. "He's taken such an unreasonable prejudice against the Landons. Let me only win her love, though, and the rest will seem comparatively easy. You must put a word in for me when you can, Sue, and I won't spoil sport between you and Maurice Landon."

From that day Cis Dimpley's habits underwent a change. He rejoiced his sister's heart by spending nearly all his spare time at home. He got into no fresh scrapes, while he seemed to have developed quite a craze for gardening.

Grace Landon certainly did not shun him when he found her in the garden, or begged permission to listen while she and Susie were reading or playing; her fair, sensitive face betrayed that acute consciousness of his presence, which is a sure sign of love. She deferred to him in opinion when she could do so honestly, and never gave him that disagreeable sense of being wiser and better informed than himself which men so detest in a woman.

Cis was making good progress and he knew it. He would not declare himself too quickly, though, lest he should startle Grace into giving him a refusal.

Meanwhile Maurice Landon had improved the shining hours by falling in love with Susie. No young fellow with eyes in his head and the organ of approbateness well developed could have done otherwise.

Intercourse with refined, cultivated people had heightened the tone of Susie's mind, and increased her general knowledge. A physical development was taking place in her as well. The girl was swiftly changing into the woman. Maurice Landon viewing that superb, generously-formed figure, that queenly head, with its coronet of gleaming braids, gave himself up for lost and accepted his fate—a very beautiful one—without any demur.

Susie was conscious of his unspoken love, conscious also that it was in her power to return it, and the knowledge gave her intense happiness. Thus the vague, pleasant, undefined love-making that precedes a declaration occupied those four young people at the same time.

Their intimacy, however, did not extend to their elders. Beyond a cold good-morning, a remark about the weather, Dimpley père had not noticed the Landons. Mrs. Dimpley had made one or two formal calls to countenance her daughter, and ascertain what sort of "person" Miss Landon was. She had, indeed, given Grace a general invitation of which the latter had never availed herself. Mr. Dimpley was not in favour of the brother and sister. They were too reserved and exclusive to please him, and he viewed the close intimacy existing between his own young people and those next door with growing displeasure.

"I tell you what it is," he said, angrily at supper one night—the odious Brownlow being present—"I won't have you two, Cis and Susie, for ever running in and out of Myrtle Villa. We know next to nothing of these Landons, and it isn't safe to be on such intimate terms with people of whose antecedents we are in ignorance. If all were right with them wouldn't they discuss their affairs the same as friend Brownlow here? Dark cupboard generally conceal a skeleton."

"He, he, quite right, Mr. Dimpley, quite right," sniggered Brownlow, with an obvious delight in hearing the Landons depreciated that made Cis long to kick him. "One can't be too careful who they associate with nowadays when burglars have their villa residences and dynamitards take furnished apartments. Mr. Maurice Landon may be a distinguished member of the swell mob for aught we know to the contrary, and his sister—"

Susie's great, liquid, dark eyes shot fire at the speaker, her brother's hand came in contact with the neck of a decanter.

Something in their manner may have quelled the speaker. He broke off abruptly and left his sentence unfinished.

"My suspicions are not altogether without foundation," said old Dimpley, impressively. "I didn't get home till two o'clock this morning, having had some special prescriptions to make up for a physician. I had locked the front door and was just going to bed when I heard the gate next door creak. Looking through the window I saw Mr. Landon creep softly up the path and let himself in with a latch-key. Now what could any respectable young man have had to keep him abroad till such an hour? There's a mystery about those Landons, and I mean to fathom it."

"He may have been to a party," said Susie, feeling very unhappy.

"Party! Nonsense! I've heard that gate creak before, and now, whenever I hear it, I shall get up and investigate. We must know who it is we are living next to."

"Of course, very necessary," said Mr. Brownlow, approvingly. "I am never out after half-past ten myself. I consider that quite late enough for anyone."

"And so it is," assented Mr. Dimpley. "You set us all a good example, Brownlow. Between us we shall run these Landons to earth, and ascertain what their little game consists of. Once for all," addressing Cis and Susie, "I forbid your having anything more to do with the people at Myrtle Villa."

CHAPTER IV.

It was Sunday evening. Mr. Dimpley's family had gone to church. Dimpley himself, feeling tired, had stayed at home to enjoy a cigar in the garden at the back of the house.

Twilight was setting in, and a pleasant stillness, broken only by the sound of Sabbath bells, reigned around.

Presently they ceased, and Dimpley, with his feet upon the rustic seat, puffed away in placid content.

Mr. Bartholomew Brownlow's back garden was separated from the Dimpleys by a dwarf wall, that belonging to the Landons by a thick, leafy hedge nearly as high as a tall man.

The rustic seat upon which Dimpley reclined was close to this hedge. Having smoked his fourth cigar a drowsiness overcame him. He was in the act of falling asleep when voices proceeding from the other side of the high hedge awoke him.

The speakers were conversing in rather low tones, as if they did not wish to be overheard. Dimpley recognised Maurice Landon's voice, with the other he was not familiar.

"I am confident that, between us, we shall be able to accomplish our task successfully," said Maurice Landon.

"Not a doubt of it, my dear boy," rejoined his companion, briskly. "Failure is out of the question. Now to settle time, place, &c. The plot we have already decided on."

Wideawake, Dimpley sat bolt upright, an expression of intense interest on his chubby face.

Perhaps he was on the point of discovering some important secret—of fathoming the mystery that surrounded the Landons. Putting his head close to the hedge, the chemist used his ears to the best possible advantage without any scruple of conscience.

He had never liked these Landons; he was jealous of the influence they had obtained over his own son and daughter. Could he but become acquainted with some shady circumstance closely affecting them he would be able to hold it up in triumph as a sufficient reason why the Landons, brother and sister, should be sent to Coventry.

"To commence with, the old man must be killed, I suppose," said Maurice Landon, as quietly as if he were arranging the preliminaries for a dinner-party. "We can't get rid of him in any other way, Charley."

"No, I think not," rejoined Charley, carelessly. "Better to make short work of him, since he won't be wanted again."

"I shall leave that to you, then," said that genial Maurice Landon, with a laugh. "You will finish him off in a more artistic manner than I am capable of, seeing that you are an old hand at murders, Charley!"

Dimpley could scarcely repress an exclamation of horror on hearing this awful assertion—an assertion which Charley evidently accepted as a compliment.

"Well, yes, I have put a few people out of the way considering that I am still a youth of five-and-twenty," said the hardened monster, puffing away at a cigar. "Some I've thrown over cliffs, some I've poisoned, others have been stabbed, garrotted, drowned. I might describe myself not incorrectly, as being a wholesale merchant in murder! I'm at my wit's end to devise some fresh and sensational means of bringing about my victim's death! It would be worth a fortune to me!"

"How do you propose dealing with the individual at present under discussion?" inquired Maurice Landon.

"I think I shall strangle him, or smother him with pillows. You see, as the affair is to take place in the middle of the night, in a house where other people are sleeping, it wouldn't do to make a noise!"

"Monsters!" gasped Dimpley, beneath his breath, becoming painfully anxious to ascertain who this delicate compliment was intended for.

"When he has been disposed of we search the house for valuables; isn't that so, Charley?"

"Exactly. Having got our plunder together we bind and carry off with us old Skinfint's pretty daughter. By-the-by, you haven't mentioned her name."

"Susie; it—it's a favourite of mine," said Maurice Landon. "I hope you like it?"

"It might be worse. Blanche, Maud, Ethel,

or Gwendoline have a more fashionable ring; but still it doesn't matter."

"Susie!" ejaculated Dimpley, on the other side of the hedge, his fluffy brown hair standing fairly on end, his eyes round with horror. "My daughter! Then the old gentleman to whom those ruffians so unfeelingly allude can be no other than myself. From what a fate have I been thus mercifully rescued! Thieves, murderers, ravishers! that I should have been living here close to such people all this time without knowing it! They little think who is listening to their cold-blooded, diabolical plans."

"The girl, of course, will be kept a prisoner till she consents to marry her captor, who is in love with her. She must be kept in ignorance of the exact manner in which her amiable parent has been disposed of," continued Charley. "Her ultimate fate has already been decided upon. We need not discuss that now."

"What a mercy it was I didn't go to church to-night with the others," thought Dimpley, mopping his hot face with his handkerchief. "They evidently give me credit for having done so. My punctual methodical habits have not escaped their attention; otherwise they would not have ventured to come out here to discuss their horrible intentions. What will that respectable man Brownlow say when he knows all?"

"We might hit upon some means of concealing the crime when once it has been committed," suggested Maurice Landon. "Couldn't we, after removing the girl and the valuables, set fire to the house, thus permitting Skinfint's body to be consumed by the flames?"

"Not a bad idea," assented his companion in wickedness; "or, stay, I've something better still. What do you think of dynamite—a regular explosion? That would be sure to bring the house down."

"Undoubtedly it would if you used enough of it, my dear fellow," retorted the other, with a laugh. "The experiment might prove risky, however. It is more original than firing the house; but there are drawbacks—technical ones—connected with it."

"When are we to commence proceedings?" inquired Charley, with a yawn.

"When you like. To-morrow I shall be engaged. Come over on—"

The voice sank lower. Dimpley, by ramming his head in among the leaves till he looked like an elderly vine-crowned Bacchus, could only distinguish something about "Tuesday night" and "the last train." Evidently the conspirators were making their appointment.

"If you will take the murder off my hands, Charley, I shall be able to manage the abduction," said Maurice Landon, cheerfully.

"All right, old fellow, I'm agreeable. It's a joint concern, you know."

"My dear boy, we are not butchers."

"I don't know what else you can call yourselves," thought Dimpley, malevolently, "to contemplate murdering an innocent, unoffending man, and carrying off his daughter after plundering his house. If you are not butchers—but vice always wears a brazen front."

"Queer old fellow—Dimpley," said Maurice Landon, when they had smoked for awhile in silence.

"Ah! I suppose so—stingy, suspicious, tyrannical, and that sort of thing."

"I believe he entertains some prejudice against me," continued Maurice. "He has forbidden Susie to run in and out of our house as usual, and done his best to give Grace and me the cold shoulder. Well, if our undertaking prospers, Charley, I shall be in a position to overcome even his prejudices."

"Wretch!" shuddered Dimpley, who coupled the remark with the prospective murder. "Does he imagine that my child would marry her father's murderer? Will they never go indoors, I wonder? To be suffocated! If there's one death I dread more than another it is that."

"There are a few minor points still re-

maining to be settled," said Charley, presently; "as to the best means of effecting our entrance, surprising the father and daughter, and so on. But they will occur to us before we really stand in need of them. I find that is generally the way."

"Hardened criminal! I daresay there are few details in the annals of crime that you are not practically acquainted with," mused Dimpley. "It's odd they haven't made the least allusion to Matilda. All their attentions seem kept in reserve for Susie and myself."

"I can manage a robbery with any man living," said Charley, proudly. "I've made a study of it, you know, and I flatter myself I could, if put to it, 'crack a crib' with any gentleman in the profession."

"Mind we are not overheard," rejoined Maurice Landon, warningly, "or your self-praise might lead to unpleasant results, Charley."

They rose after awhile and went indoors, much to Dimpley's delight. He had not dared to move or stir while they remained in the garden, through fear lest his presence should be detected, and the nicely-arranged tragedy in which he was to play the principal part rudely anticipated.

When he had ascertained to his complete satisfaction that the coast was clear, Dimpley, whose every limb was cramped, attempted to rise. His first effort resulted in a fall, since his benumbed legs—like unkind friends—refused to support him.

Gathering himself up with an effort he reached the house. Once there he hastily examined the various bolts and locks, to assure himself of their efficacy in case of need. Even the servants were out, and the loneliness, after what he had just heard, seemed oppressive in the extreme.

He lighted the gas and drew down the blinds, welcoming even the company of the cat, which had crept up from the kitchen. Then he went to the sideboard and poured himself out a glass of brandy.

That supplied him with a little Dutch courage. After drinking it he sat down and tried to arrange his plan of action.

For that night at least he would keep his own secret. He would not share it even with Brownlow. On the next morning he would present himself early at the police station and have an interview with the superintendent, that would result in unpleasant consequences to the unprincipled plotters next door.

On the whole—although considerably startled and shocked—Dimpley rather enjoyed his position as a man who had discovered a murderous plot directed against himself in time to frustrate it.

It gave him a profound sense of self-importance, while it gratified and endorsed the dislike and suspicion he had always entertained towards the Landons. Now he would be able to point the moral and adorn the tale for the benefit of Cis and Susie. They must perforce take such a warning to heart, and eschew for ever their charming new acquaintances.

Dimpley reflected, not altogether without a sensation of pleasure, that when the principal facts became public property, and he had to give evidence against the two prisoners, he would, for the time being, enjoy a great deal of notoriety. His portrait might appear in the *Illustrated News* or the *Pictorial World*; laudatory articles would be written concerning the presence of mind and the promptitude he had displayed upon becoming acquainted with the plot against his own life. He would have been rather sorry than otherwise to be deprived of the excitement in store for him, especially now that he felt himself to be on the safe side.

"I wonder what part the sister—that demure, ladylike woman who never speaks above her breath—takes in their nefarious schemes," pondered the chemist. "Will she be included in the charge? I must ask the superintendent about that. Doubtless she is as deep in the mud as they are in the mire, only they keep

her in the background. If they were to change their minds and come to-night instead of Tuesday! That is a fearful possibility. Perhaps I'd better—oh! goodness gracious! who can that be?" as the front door bell rang loudly.

After reconnoitring cautiously, and discovering that it was only his family returning from church, Dimpley admitted them. They were rather astonished to find locks, bolts, and chain all in requisition.

"Why, papa, how pale you are!" exclaimed Susie, playfully. "Did you take us for burglars?"

"It is as well to be careful," said her father, impressively, "and don't talk too loud about burglars, Susie. The very walls have ears!"

"Lor! Dimpley," said his wife, regarding him curiously, "what is the matter with you? You don't look like yourself. Have you had any bad news?"

"Oh, no, nothing of the kind," asserted the chemist, with an air of gloomy mystery that didn't altogether tone in with his chubby, comfortable, commonplace visage. "Why should you think so, Matilda?"

"We had a splendid sermon," continued Mrs. Dimpley. "I wish you had been with us."

Dimpley had been listening to a discourse, the text of which hardly pleased him. Nevertheless he kept his own counsel, in spite of a burning desire to impart his discovery to someone else that possessed him.

For the life of him he could not help looking mysterious, however. He walked as if he were treading on eggshells; he uttered weird, cabalistic sentences, and indulged in so many unwonted actions that his wife and daughter began to entertain doubts as to his sanity.

"I hope your papa isn't going to be ill, Susie," remarked Mrs. Dimpley, anxiously. "I have never seen him act so strangely before."

"What can he be doing now?" cried Susie, as a heavy piece of furniture was slowly bumped from one side of the room overhead to the other.

"I've been moving the chest of drawers in our room, Matilda," said Mr. Dimpley, on descending. "I mean to barricade our door with them to-night—those locks are not sufficient protection against burglars. Susie, you'd better do the same."

"He's mad!" whispered Mrs. Dimpley, despairingly.

Susie, who thought her father was only developing some fresh crotchet, hardly shared her mother's alarm. She was feeling somewhat rebellious respecting her interdicted friendship with Grace Landon, and inclined to resent what she termed her father's unjust prejudice against the Landons.

There were stolen meetings occasionally between Maurice and Susie. He had acquainted her of his love, and received the assurance of her own in return. Cis also had declared himself to Grace Landon, and met with a favourable reception. Since she would not consent to a clandestine engagement he had decided to brave the paternal thunders, and openly announce his predilection for Grace.

Matters were fast approaching a crisis. Mr. Dimpley, barring and bolting that night till his wife trembled for his reason, might succeed in keeping burglars out; but the little laughing thief called love had already effected an entrance, and stolen the hearts of both son and daughter.

"I think we're all right now, Matilda," said Dimpley, with a satisfied smile, when he had fastened bells to all the shutters, double-locked the doors, and placed an old-fashioned pistol, a knuckle-duster, and a life-preserver on a small table close to his bed. "We shall be ready for them if they do come, shan't we?"

"I—I suppose so, Robert," faltered poor Mrs. Dimpley, hardly knowing which gave

her most alarm—the problematical burglars, or her husband's extraordinary proceedings.

CHAPTER V.

Monday morning dawned bright and fair. Mr. Dimpley, who had passed a somewhat disturbed night, was up and out before nine o'clock—an astonishing circumstance, of which his family did not fail to take note.

The Brompton-road was fated to see but little of him that day. For once, at least, Dimpley owned a soul above physis.

His assistants might poison half the customers by giving them wrong drugs, but until he had succeeded in placing the Landon business upon a satisfactory footing, he would be missing from his accustomed place behind the counter.

He had an interview with the superintendent of police at the nearest station. He gave that individual a detailed account of the conversation he had overheard in his garden on the previous evening.

The superintendent, after asking a great many questions, which seemed to Mr. Dimpley very irrelevant, and thoroughly probing the story submitted to him as if he had his doubts about its authenticity, promised to send a man in plain clothes to keep a sharp look-out upon Myrtle Villa during Monday and Tuesday, to see if he could elicit any fresh facts respecting the doings of its inmates.

On Tuesday night three or four men should be in readiness to spring out upon the burglars when they attempted to enter Mr. Dimpley's residence, and convey them to the police-station.

Well satisfied with the result of his visit, Dimpley returned to Laburnum Villa.

He found Cis there awaiting his arrival in anything but a tranquil frame of mind.

His evil genius must have persuaded poor Cis to acquaint his father with his liking for Grace Landon, and his desire to become engaged to her, at such an unpropitious moment. Cis, however, knowing nothing of the conspiracy on foot, had decided to make a clean breast of it, and get the unpleasant interview over without any more delay.

"Well, Cis, what is it?" said Dimpley, when his son had expressed a desire to speak with him in private. "I hope you haven't been getting into any fresh scrapes! If so, don't expect me to help you out of them."

This was not a very auspicious beginning.

Cis declared, truthfully enough, that he had not got into any fresh scrapes, that what he had to relate was quite of another character; he had, in short, fallen in love with a young lady who—judging from his (Dimpley's) description of her, carefully suppressing names—must combine in her own person all the charms, mental and bodily, bestowed upon woman in the aggregate.

"Humph! all very fine!" growled old Dimpley, when Cis stopped to take breath. He wasn't in love with the girl, and he could afford to be critical. Besides, he felt certain there was more in the background, that ere long he would be in a position to give Cis a very disagreeable surprise. "You're rather young to think of getting married, Cis. You might wait till you have passed your examination and blossomed out into a doctor, with an income of your own. Getting married means taking somebody else's child to keep, let me tell you, and that is rather an expensive hobby; at least, I have found it so. You haven't mentioned the young lady's name yet, or alluded to her connections. I hope they are above suspicion!"

"I have every reason to believe so, dad," said Cis, nervously tugging at his moustache. "I have purposely kept the name of the girl I love in the background until now, because I am given to understand you entertain some prejudice against her. You will pardon me for saying that your prejudice is utterly without foundation. You only require to know her more intimately in order to like her. She—"

"Will you tell me her name, sir! without any more circumlocution?" snarled old Dimpley.

"Grace Landon," said his son, promptly. "She is the dearest girl in the world, the only one that I shall ever care for. If you will consent to an engagement between us, dad, and supply the needful for a year or so to come, I will do my best to settle down into a steady, hard-working man, one after your own heart."

"Oh, you will, will you?" replied Dimpley, with the ghost of a chuckle.

The revelation he had in store prevented him from storming at Cis for having dared to fall in love with Grace Landon against orders.

When once he knew all he would be sufficiently crushed and punished for his disobedience. Grace Landon, indeed!—and her brother—

But Dimpley decided to remain silent, to temporise with his son for the present. The dénouement, when it came, would be all the grander for his having allowed no hint of the startling truth, the approaching *fiasco*, to escape him.

"Yes; I give you my word; dad, that I will reform if you will only countenance Grace," said Cis, earnestly, rather puzzled to interpret his father's unusual demeanour aright.

As a rule, when his will was crossed, Dimpley contrived to make things very unpleasant for those in his immediate vicinity.

On this occasion, however, he displayed no wrath. A smile actually hovered round his lips. Cis, perceiving it, thought his cause was won.

"It doesn't do to decide upon important things in a hurry, my boy," he said, blandly.

"I shan't give you my answer at once. I must think it over. Come again on Tuesday night—better still, Wednesday morning—and you shall learn my decision."

"It's awfully rough upon a fellow to keep him in suspense all that time!" pleaded Cis. "I wish you would let me know the best or the worst at once, dad!"

But Dimpley was inexorable, and Cis went away more than half-inclined to doubt his father's motive in receiving his news so calmly. A dead calm when a storm has been expected is always more ominous than the storm itself.

Dimpley shook his head when Cis was gone, and chuckled softly.

"I'm sorry for him," he began. "No, I'm not! He deserves to be punished for falling in love with that man's sister against my express commands. Well, his eyes will soon be opened to perceive the real character of both brother and sister. It will be a warning to him, I hope, and to Susie also. I am not at all sure that she is not in love with Maurice Landon. If the rude awakening cures them both of their foolish fancies and makes them more obedient for the future, so much the better. I shall be uncommonly glad when Tuesday night has come—and gone."

For a while Dimpley felt uncertain whether to take Mr. Bartholomew Brownlow into his confidence or not. The yearning to share his important secret with some one else finally got the upper hand of him.

Having got Brownlow into his private and particular saugery, the walls of which were garnished with a curious collection of pipes, from the humble clay to the lordly meerschaum, Dimpley, after first pledging him to secrecy, informed him of the conspiracy then afoot against himself.

Mr. Bartholomew Brownlow turned very pale, then expressed his profound astonishment in broken, disjointed sentences.

"A burglar! Maurice Landon a burglar!" he ejaculated, thoughtfully. "I am surprised. To think that I— My dear Mr. Dimpley, you have, indeed, made a timely discovery!"

"Yes, quite so," said Dimpley, nursing one short leg, and accepting the praise as being

only his due. "I fancy a detective could hardly have acted more to the purpose."

"What action are the police going to take in the matter?" asked Brownlow, nervously, biting his finger-nails. "Of course you have communicated with them?"

"Was at the station before nine o'clock this morning," said Dimpley. "There's promptitude for you! A man in plain clothes has been set to watch Myrtle Villa. I saw him lounge by just now, looking for all the world like a begging-letter writer. Those fellows make up as well as actors. To-morrow night three or four men are to be in ambush behind my laurels, ready to seize the villains when they arrive."

"Ah, a capital idea!" rejoined Mr. Bartholomew Brownlow, with a sickly smile. "I wish I could assist you in capturing these desperadoes; but my rheumatism makes me fearful of venturing out at night."

"We shall manage very well, my dear fellow," said Dimpley, valiantly. "If you would be obliging enough to remain with Mrs. Dimpley and my daughter during my absence it is all I require of you. I shall have to go with the constables and their prisoners to the police-station, you know, to prefer the charge against them, and the women-folks might feel nervous at the idea of being left in the house by themselves after such an occurrence. If you would keep them company now—"

"Oh, certainly!" said the ex-stationer, "I suppose," he continued, anxiously, "I shall not be called upon to give evidence when the prisoners are examined before a magistrate? I have no wish to figure in a police-court; indeed, I have a rooted objection to doing anything of the kind."

"Make yourself easy on that point," answered Dimpley, reassuringly; "you will not even witness the seizure. I shall be there supporting the police in the execution of their duty, and that is sufficient."

"Have you acquainted Mrs. and Miss Dimpley with the approaching exposure?" inquired Brownlow.

"No—o, not yet. I must think, or they will be taken completely by surprise. To-morrow will be time enough for that. I may rely upon you, Brownlow, to protect them during my brief absence?"

"Certainly, I shall feel honoured," sniggered Brownlow, his parchment complexion looking unusually muddy, his deep-set eyes glistening horribly. "Your young people, Mr. Dimpley," he continued, "have become quite partial to these Landons; they will not take kindly to the idea of their being common criminals!"

"They must," snapped Dimpley, irascibly. "They can't fly in the face of sober facts. Their foolish infatuation for this genteel burglar and his sister will soon be cured. It will teach them to be careful who they associate with in the future."

Dimpley went through the locking, bolting and barricading process again on Monday night, while his wife and daughter watched his proceedings in a state of ever-growing wonderment.

On Tuesday he was even more fidgety and restless than he had been on the previous day. He did not go to business, but stationed himself at the dining-room window where he could see without being seen, and furtively watched everyone who went by. Mrs. Dimpley, more alarmed than ever, wanted to send for Cis.

Her alarm took another form with surprise added to it, when, after tea, Dimpley informed her in the presence of Susie of what he had overheard in the garden, and of the exciting scene that was set to take place that very night.

"Oh, Dimpley, what an escape!" gasped the poor woman, throwing her arms round her husband's neck to the detriment of his collar and scarf. "To contemplate murdering you, not to say a word about myself! Villains! Monsters! I hope the police will not allow them to escape. And Susie too—to

suggest carrying her off in that barefaced manner. Why we might be living in the middle ages!"

"I won't believe it, I can't believe it!" cried Susie, defiantly. "Papa, mamma, it is monstrous! Maurice Landon a burglar, his sister in league with him? You must be, you are, the victims of some gross misconception!"

"Nothing of the kind," said Dimpley, indignantly. "If you are so infatuated with these worthless people that you will not believe me, miss, wait till to-night. When you see them in the custody of the police perhaps you will be convinced."

"How can you defend a man who has made up his mind to carry you off by force, Susie?" said her mother, reproachfully; "a desperate, hardened villain."

"Why should Maurice Landon seek to carry me off by force when he is aware that I am quite willing to accompany him of my own free will?" inquired Susie, dauntlessly. "This inconsistency alone is enough to make me doubt your story, papa. Indeed, you must be mistaken."

"You, at least, are very plain-spoken," retorted her father. "You confess that you are in love with a would-be if not an actual murderer."

"No, but with a brave, honourable man, a true gentleman, incapable of such a crime as the one imputed to him," said Susie, steadily. "Papa, I cannot believe that Maurice Landon ever planned anything so diabolical. It isn't, it can't be true," bursting into tears and hiding her face in the sofa-cushion. "It would break my heart!"

"Mother, you will look after her," whispered Dimpley, "see that no communication takes place between Susie and the people next door. She is capable of warning them and spoiling all our plans. While I am absent with the constables Mr. Brownlow will keep you company."

"Oh, Robert! don't run any risk," pleaded his wife. "I shall feel so nervous about you." "I promise you I won't, Matilda," rejoined Dimpley, with the firm intention of keeping his promise, "and now to work."

When it grew dark four stalwart policemen were smuggled into Mr. Dimpley's kitchen, where they were regaled with cold mutton and strong ale by the frightened but delighted domestics who had been let into the secret, and whose love of the sensational was in a fair way of being gratified.

After refreshing themselves they took up a strong position behind Mr. Dimpley's laurels in the front garden. The man in plain clothes had succeeded in gaining but little additional information respecting the Landons, while he had obtained no clue to Maurice Landon's usual pursuits. Nothing of a suspicious nature had transpired to support Mr. Dimpley's statement.

The clocks were striking twelve, and Mr. Dimpley, who had stationed himself at a safe distance behind the policemen, was beginning to get cramped and chilly, when foot-steps were heard coming along the pavement, and Maurice Landon's voice, speaking unusually loud for a burglar, sounded in his ear.

"That's him," he whispered to the nearest policeman, forgetting Lindley Murray in his excitement. "Whatever you do don't let him escape!"

The two men reached the gate leading up to Laburnum Villa, and then paused for a moment.

It was a very dark night, and Laburnum Villa resembled its neighbour, Myrtle Villa, so closely that it was difficult to tell them apart at that hour.

"I think we're right," said Maurice Landon, peering into the darkness ahead. "Come along, Charley."

But ere they had traversed half the length of Mr. Dimpley's front garden a policeman's bull's eye flashed out upon them, and four stout fellows held them as if in a vice.

"Hullo, what is the meaning of this?" cried Maurice Landon, indignantly. "You've made a mistake, constable."

"That won't do, young man," replied the officer, quietly. "I've heard that tale before. You're satisfied that these are the men, sir?" appealing to Dimpley.

"Quite—positive," shrieked Dimpley, performing a kind of eccentric war-dance round the astonished prisoners. "Take them away at once. I'm coming with you to the station."

"Mr. Dimpley!" exclaimed Maurice Landon, "what are you doing in my garden?"

"Your garden, sir; I beg to inform you that it is mine. Your assumed innocence will not save you. Officers, take them away."

"But, Mr. Dimpley, surely you know me—Maurice Landon?"

"Oh, yes, I know you only too well. Burglar, assassin, abductor, you are about to meet with your reward. Now, constables!"

And in spite of vigorous protests not confined to mere words, and strenuous remonstrances, Maurice Landon and his friend or confederate were marched off to the nearest police-station, Dimpley bringing up the rear.

CHAPTER VI.

MAURICE LANDON'S indignation on being thus unexpectedly taken into custody and conveyed to a police-station equalled his astonishment. If he had made the mistake of entering Mr. Dimpley's garden instead of his own in the darkness it was not an offence to be visited with such condign punishment, he angrily declared. Of any other reason for his being taken into custody together with his friend, or accomplice, he avowed himself ignorant.

Charlie Ashton, on the other hand, being blest with a keen sense of the ridiculous, was inclined to regard the perplexing incident in the light of a capital joke.

"Is your neighbour a lunatic, Maurice?" he inquired as they went along, in a tone just loud enough for Mr. Dimpley to overhear. "If not—if he can be proved responsible for his own actions—we shall have a nice little claim for compensation against him. By Jove! when you invited me to sleep at your house, old fellow, you might as well have mentioned that it was the station-house. Sudden shocks are dangerous to a delicate constitution like mine."

"How can you jest about it, Charley?" retorted the other indignantly. "You would crack jokes at a funeral if anyone were foolish enough to include you in the assembly. Dimpley shall answer for this night's work and the indignity he has subjected us to, the old madman, for some cause known only to himself."

"Here we are at the station," said Charley, cheerfully. "Now for a lucid explanation. Is it possible that we have been and gone and done something dreadful, Maurice, in a fit of mental aberration, for which we are about to be called to account?"

"Now, sir," said Maurice Landon, addressing the superintendent in anything but a cowed manner, "perhaps you will be kind enough to inform us why we have been brought here at the instigation of this—person," glaring savagely at old Dimpley. "It is rather a serious matter to arrest two gentlemen who have committed no offence, when in the act of returning to their own house at night, and haul them off to a police-station. This fact will be brought home to the prosecutor without loss of time."

The superintendent looked puzzled. The two men did not resemble either professional burglars, or members of the swell mob. They were beyond doubt gentlemen. Had the constables or Mr. Dimpley made a mistake, and got hold of the wrong individuals, he wondered?

"Oh, they're very innocent," scoffed Dimpley, still keeping well in the background. "It seems almost superfluous to acquaint them

with the charge. The law will teach you, sir," he continued, addressing Maurice Landon, "that elderly gentlemen are not to be smothered in their beds, to have their houses robbed, and their daughters carried off with impunity. You may as well plead guilty at once, since your villainous plans have been overheard and exposed."

"He's mad!" ejaculated Maurice Landon, impatiently, "stark, staring mad. Inspector, you will not surely keep us here all night upon the unfounded assertions of a lunatic?"

"This gentleman," began the superintendent, who was more than half inclined to doubt Dimpley's sanity himself, "has made a statement to the effect that you and your friend, or accomplice, were overheard by him on Sunday night planning a burglary that included both murder and abduction, and discussing the best means of breaking into his house on this, Tuesday, night. The charge against you, as it stands at present, is a very serious one. You will be brought up before the magistrate in the morning. For to-night you will have to put up with such accommodation as the police-cells afford. Any evidence in—"

But here he was interrupted by a burst of laughter from Charley Ashton, who, up to this moment, had been listening intently to his explanation of the charge against himself and friend.

Such laughter had seldom echoed through that dreary official building, to which so many people were in the habit of paying unwilling visits. Genuine, hearty, contagious, it rang out, peal after peal, as Charley rocked himself to and fro on the hard wooden bench with the tears running down his cheeks, and his hands held to his aching sides till the representatives of law and order found it difficult to avoid joining in.

"Maurice, old boy, it's too good," he gasped, in a brief interlude. "We didn't bargain for such a scene as this when we planned the others. Robbery—murder—abduction—desperate characters—unseen listener taking it all in greedily—oh! I never shall survive it," and he went off into a fresh peal of laughter, in which Maurice Landon—in spite of his intense vexation—could not avoid joining him.

Their behaviour added to the superintendent's perplexity. With sullen, reckless, or abject prisoners he was well acquainted, but these young men did not belong to either class. Their mirth was genuine.

"Insufferable effrontery," exclaimed Dimpley, an angry witness of their amusement, "but it won't save them though. There's no getting away from hard facts."

"Charley, stop laughing," said Maurice remonstratingly, "or you'll have a fit. The ridiculous charge this gentleman has thought proper to prefer against us can be explained away in a satisfactory manner," he continued, addressing the superintendent, and turning his back upon Dimpley. "The conversation already described—in which he played the dishonourable part of spy and listener—had no reference to him, or, indeed, to any other individual existing. My friend and I, believing ourselves to be alone, were discussing the plot of a new play which, when finished, will be our joint production. In the MS. of that play—which I can produce for your inspection—you will find all the details of the robbery, the murder, and the abduction, fully carried out. From the drift of our remarks, any man not absolutely thick-witted and illiterate might have gathered that we were merely discussing a work of fiction, not an actual crime."

"Your explanation may be correct enough, gentlemen," said the superintendent, "but without further proof of your innocence I cannot set you at liberty. Self-exculpation has to be accepted very cautiously, especially in a police-court."

"A plausible tale, indeed!" cried old Dimpley, fiercely, but not without feeling extremely uncomfortable. Maurice and Charley looked so little like criminals, bore

themselves so confidently, that his courage began to ooze away, his exulting mood gave place to an anxious one.

"I heard you call my daughter by name, sir," he protested. "You spoke of eventually being able to overcome my dislike for you, of making Miss Dimpley your wife. Do you dare to deny all this?"

"Certainly not. The words are correct enough, only you applied a wrong meaning to them," said Maurice growing cool as the other waxed hot. "I have ventured to name my heroine after your daughter, between whom and myself there exists an attachment. When I spoke of overcoming your prejudice against me I did not entertain any idea of using such gentle persuasion to gain my end as a feather pillow placed in unpleasant proximity to your mouth, Mr. Dimpley. I trusted to the ultimate success of my play to accomplish that. In short, you are the victim of your own mean, unworthy suspicions, and dishonourable eavesdrooping."

Dimpley mopped his red face and gasped as these hard words were flung at him by the young man.

"I must have proof—convincing proof—before I change my opinion, or accept such an improbable story," he stammered. "I can't have made such a consummate ass of myself as this voluble young man would have me believe. No, no, this play-writing business is a fabrication from beginning to end, trumped up to hide his real guilt. You don't stay out till one o'clock in the morning and sometimes later, sir, for nothing."

"As the editor of a morning newspaper my avocation frequently compels me to keep late, or rather very early, hours," replied Maurice, calmly. "I make these explanations less to satisfy your insolent, ill-bred curiosity than for the purpose of freeing myself and friend from the absurd, unfounded charge you have brought against us. Now for my proofs. A portion of the MS. of the play is at this moment in the hand of Mr. Warren Seymour, the manager of the Bijou Theatre. I will write a note to him, which the superintendent will be kind enough to forward. Upon his representations we shall doubtless gain our release, promising to come up before the magistrate for hearing to-morrow morning."

The note was written, and despatched by one of the men. Mr. Dimpley sat down to await the arrival of the theatrical manager in anything but a peaceful frame of mind.

If it should happen that he had made a mistake how awful the consequences would be! He turned alternately hot and cold as he dwelt upon them.

Cis and Susie would always have a powerful weapon to wield against him. He would become the laughing-stock of the neighbourhood, not to mention the money he might have to forfeit, the censure he would have to undergo for hauling two perfectly innocent men off to the police-station under a misapprehension. Permitted by courtesy to remain in the ante-room instead of the cell Charley Ashton prowled around in search of active mischief.

When the superintendent's back was turned he surreptitiously poured a quantity of lamp-oil, standing by, into the kettle used for boiling water to make coffee for the men on night duty, an attention which they—not finding it out until the coffee had been made and tasted—hardly appreciated, while he further committed himself by appropriating the suppers of two members of the force, then absent.

"What an idiot you are, Charley!" remonstrated Maurice Landon. "Do you wish to justify their conduct in bringing you here? You certainly are doing your best in that direction."

"It seems a pity to fall short of the high opinions that have been entertained respecting your merits and favourite pursuits," said Charley, calmly. "I never 'lifted' anything before; it's quite a new sensation. Let's see what Robert regales himself upon. Hem, thick bread-and-butter and cold sausage! Not

very appetising. Cooks must be scarce when the force are reduced to such fare as this."

"Put it down."

"No; I shall take it away with me as a memento of my visit. I should like to see their faces when that coffee is poured out and tasted. If—ah, here comes Seymour!"

Mr. Warren Seymour, a bright, genial, pleasant-faced, elderly gentleman, entered the room at this moment. The greeting between him and the embryo dramatists was a somewhat hilarious one, the awkward situation in which they were placed being, as Mr. Seymour declared, the best that had ever come under his notice, professional or otherwise.

Maurice Landon's note had apprised him of the misconception to some extent. He had brought the MS. of the play with him accordingly, to convince the police superintendent of the truthful nature of the explanation given.

With two or three highly delighted policemen grinning in the background, and the anything but delighted Mr. Dimpley facing him, the manager read a few extracts from the unfinished play, sufficient to prove that the robbery, the murder, and the abduction were "all in it."

"And if you're not satisfied now," he said, in conclusion, "why I'll bail them both with as much pleasure as if they were leaky vessels, which they may be, seeing they have to do with authorship."

The superintendent expressed his willingness to set the young men at liberty, providing they would promise to appear before the magistrate on the following morning.

To the crestfallen, disconsolate Dimpley he addressed a few curt words, blaming him for the useless trouble he had occasioned, and the groundless suspicions upon which he had acted, without first investigating them.

"You'll find yourself placed in a very unpleasant position if these gentlemen round upon you, sir, for the annoyance and notoriety you will have been the means of bringing upon them," he remarked, consolingly. "It will all appear in the daily papers."

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Dimpley, aghast. "I—I wouldn't see it in print for fifty pounds. Of course I'm extremely sorry that I should have made such a mistake, but nineteen men out of twenty would have done the same thing. My listening to the conversation was the result not of design but of accident. I was sitting on the bench in my garden, smoking, and I couldn't help overhearing it. If Mr. Landon had displayed less reserve respecting his profession and—and everything connected with him, I should have been less ready to suspect him. As a rule, mystery serves to create suspicion."

"It was not altogether without reason that I exercised a wise reserve regarding my affairs," said Maurice Landon, coldly. "I was foolish enough at one time to put my name to a bill to oblige an old friend of my father, whose name was John Dimpley. He may be, indeed I believe he is, closely related to you, supposing him to be still alive. When the bill became due he was missing; he had taken refuge in flight, leaving me to bear the responsibilities that he had so basely evaded. After giving up all that I had there was still money owing. I no sooner amassed a little than the creditors were after me like hounds to take it from me. Under such circumstances it was hardly to be expected that I should advertise myself, my profession, or my present whereabouts, more than was strictly necessary. Directly or indirectly you and yours, Mr. Dimpley, seem fated to work me some harm."

Dimpley said nothing in reply. Shame and surprise kept him silent. That this young fellow whom he had suspected and misjudged should prove not only to be a respectable, deserving member of society, but one who attributed all his pecuniary embarrassments to the dastardly conduct of John Dimpley, the ne'er-do-well member of the Dimpley family and own brother to Robert, was a bitter blow to him,

Ere he could collect his scattered faculties, and decide whether or not to make an ample apology, Maurice Landon and Charley Ashton left the station, accompanied by Mr. Seymour.

Ashton was to have slept at Myrtle Villa that night to be in readiness to start with his friend the next morning by an early train for a few days' shooting. Mr. Dimpley's action, however, rendered it necessary for them to change their plans, or at least to postpone them.

Mr. Dimpley started on his own return voyage with a very crestfallen air. How was he to explain to Mrs. Dimpley, to Susie, to the respectable Brownlow, the ludicrous mistake he had been guilty of? Would he not lose caste with them as an oracle of wisdom and foresight for ever? And Cis, what would he not say on being made acquainted with the horrid story?

Tired and disconsolate, Mr. Dimpley reached Laburnum Villa to find all the windows dark and rayless.

Surely the family had not gone to bed without awaiting his return? He had left them too full of excitement for that to be possible. And Brownlow had promised to stay with them till he, Dimpley, returned.

He rang the bell lustily. Getting no answer he tried the door. To his astonishment it opened; it had been left unfastened.

Strangely alarmed as to what might have happened during his absence, Dimpley waited till the policeman came round, and told his story. Together they entered the apparently deserted house, Dimpley, out of courtesy, allowing the policeman to go first.

CHAPTER VII.

In order to account for the condition in which Mr. Dimpley found his residence it will be necessary to go back a little way, and explain what happened there after he had gone with the prisoners to the police-station.

Mrs. Dimpley feeling not a little excited and upset, to use her own term, by what had occurred, hurried off to the house of a female friend further down on the opposite side of the road, taking Susie with her, the two maid-servants accompanying them.

Mr. Brownlow had expressed himself quite willing to take charge of Laburnum Villa during their absence.

Indeed, he had suggested to Mrs. Dimpley that it would be best for her to seek asylum with her bosom friend, Mrs. Martin, till Dimpley returned, in case any more unpleasant incidents would transpire meanwhile.

"My dear madam, I am not alarmed at the idea of being left alone," the ex-stationer said, valiantly, on being questioned by Mrs. Dimpley. "I shan't find the time long, and it will be a bad job for anyone who tries to break in while I am in charge! Dimpley and I will escort you home later on. After the fright you have endured it will be better for you not to remain in the house at present."

Accordingly they had gone—in Susie's case under protest.

She did not like Brownlow, and she would have preferred remaining at home till her father returned, but Mrs. Dimpley was resolute.

They took shelter under Mrs. Martin's hospitable roof, leaving Brownlow in charge of Laburnum Villa.

The policeman and Mr. Dimpley groped their way into the deserted dining-room. Dimpley lighted the gas, and gazed forlornly around.

"What can have happened to my family?" he exclaimed. "I left them here in the care of a neighbour, Mr. Bartholomew Brownlow, while I went to the station with these men, and they are gone! Policeman, what is the meaning of it? Can some awful tragedy have taken place during my brief absence?"

The policeman made no reply. They went over the house only to find it thoroughly ransacked; while they were thus engaged Mrs.

Dimpley and Susie returned, only to find that Mr. Brownlow had disappeared.

The policeman went to the station to make his report and give an account of the robbery, while the Dimpleys—sleep being out of the question—stayed up all night. Going through the house in a body they constantly discovered some fresh loss to lament. Even the maid-servants had not escaped; their boxes had been ransacked. The burglar was evidently well up in his business who had paid them a visit.

Dimpley longed for and yet dreaded the morning. It would bring Cis, who was coming for his answer, and who would have to learn, not that his *fiancée* was unworthy of him, as Dimpley had fondly imagined, but that his father owed her and her brother an ample apology.

Then he would have to appear before the magistrate, who would in all probability censure him severely, not to mention the subsequent interview that Maurice Landon would demand, with a view to obtaining satisfaction for the indignity to which he had been subjected.

On the whole, the morning did not bid fair to be a pleasant one. But it proved to be even worse than Dimpley had anticipated.

They were sitting at breakfast when a policeman came to inform Mr. Dimpley that a man, whom they imagined to be identical with the burglar who had ransacked Laburnum Villa, was then in custody.

He was an old hand, who had long been "wanted" by the police. His cleverness in assuming various disguises had, however, foiled them until now. Taken red-handed with a great deal of stolen property upon him when in the act of making for a thieves' resort, no evidence of his guilt was lacking. Would Mr. Dimpley accompany the officer to the station for the purpose of identifying the stolen articles?

Mr. Dimpley trotted off with alacrity. The property was his beyond a doubt. Plate, jewellery, all belonged to him. His spirits rose as he recognised each familiar article. Then he expressed a wish to see the prisoner.

"I can't recognise him, you know, because I have never—oh! goodness gracious! is it possible? Mr. Bartholomew Brownlow!"

"At your service, sir," replied that worthy individual, sarcastically, on being confronted with the man whom he had first deceived and then robbed. "It was not convenient for me to remain at Laburnum Villa until your return. Otherwise I should not have departed my post."

"Officer!" ejaculated Dimpley, "this man has been living next door to me for some time. He described himself as a stationer retired from business. I have frequently invited him to spend the evening with myself and family. Do you mean to say that I have been living on friendly terms with a professional burglar?"

Poor Mr. Dimpley, he was more than crest-fallen, he was crushed. That he should have suspected and outraged the feelings of people who were praiseworthy and high-principled while he had received this burglar, this vile fiend and scum of the earth, into the bosom of his family to the exclusion of the Landons, seemed a judgment upon him for his overweening worship of mere appearances and surface respectability, his fussy, inquisitive, suspicious tendencies.

The interview with the magistrate came next on the list. The would-be prosecutor was severely censured for giving two gentlemen into custody on a charge that wouldn't hold water.

Dimpley had expected this. He made an ample apology, which Maurice Landon and Charley Ashton consented to accept. Neither of them expressed a desire for any further compensation, a fact that served to raise them several degrees higher in Mr. Dimpley's estimation.

On reaching home, tired and dejected, limp even to his shirt-collar, he found that Cis had

arrived there before him. Cis had heard the story, as far as they knew it, from his mother and Susie, and he was not a little indignant at the insult offered to the Landons.

"So this was what the gov'nor had got in store for me?" he remarked, hotly. "I knew there was mischief brewing; I gathered that from his manner. I hope Grace and Maurice will consent to overlook his confounded meddling and the annoyance it has caused them."

Mr. Dimpley's news concerning Brownlow's capture formed the apex of the pyramid of astonishing events that had grown up in a single night. He looked so utterly crest-fallen and disconsolate that his children could but pity him.

"Never mind, gov'nor," said Cis, consolingly. "Mistakes will occur in the best regulated families, you know. I always detested that fellow, Brownlow. I knew that he must be a cad and a shuffling hypocrite, if nothing worse; and so it has proved. The Landons won't be hard to pacify, I'm certain. By-the-by, you haven't given your consent to my engagement yet."

"I—I have no objections to raise against it," rejoined Dimpley. "My suspicions concerning Miss Landon and her brother having proved groundless you are at liberty to engage yourself to her if she will accept you. Perhaps, after what has happened, she will not care to do so."

"Oh, I haven't much fear on that score!" said Cis, disappearing abruptly.

"We must do what we can for those young people, Masilda," observed Dimpley, proceeding to inform his wife of the monetary loss that Maurice had suffered through John Dimpley's dishonourable conduct with regard to the bill. "John was always a scamp," he said, in conclusion, "and he contrived to make Mr. Landon the scapegoat for his misdoings."

Susie said nothing, but her soft dark eyes gleamed with pleasure on hearing this fresh proof of her lover's worth, and the claim he had upon them, from her father's lips.

"Here they are to answer for themselves," cried Cis, bringing Maurice and Grace, whom he had been to fetch, in with him.

Mr. Dimpley kissed Gracie, and spoke a few words to her that brought the rich colour to her delicate lovely face. Then he turned to her brother, and held out his hand.

"I owe you some compensation, Mr. Landon, for last night's mistake," he said, bravely. "If you—"

"There is only one compensation you can offer me that I shall be willing to accept," said the young man, with a grave smile, glancing in Susie's direction.

"Hum! Ah! Well, you'd better take her, and I'll do what I can for you both," rejoined Dimpley. "You'll be marrying your sister's husband's sister, you know. It sounds rather mixed, but I don't think it comes within the forbidden degrees of relationship. I hope you'll all be happy, and," magnanimously, "that your play will be a success, Mr. Landon."

"At any rate, it has caused a great deal of sensation already," said Maurice Landon, laughingly.

Mr. Bartholomew Brownlow was ultimately sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. Cis passed his examination creditably, and got married to Gracie. Maurice and Susie continue to reside at Myrtle Villa, a pair of married lovers. The play scored a success, bringing its writers both fame and money.

After the double marriage Mr. and Mrs. Dimpley returned to the Brompton-road. His experience of a suburban villa had inspired Mr. Dimpley with such a profound hatred for those charming residences that his wife had not the heart to make him dwell in one any longer.

Laburnum Villa is to be let on lease, rent moderate, to a careful tenant, who is also expected to pay the taxes.

[THE END.]

FACETIÆ.

WHEN is a wall like a set of good fellows?—When it is composed of a lot of "bricks."

THE grocer puts sand in his sugar, thinking he may thereby put rocks in his pocket.

THE night that is as black as your hat hath a darkness that may be felt.

THE "Maiden Circuits" that maidens long for—Wedding rings.

THE hilarity of the season extends even to the feathered tribe, and many a turkey loses its head in the holiday time.

IN spite of the rule asserting it, two of a kind do not make a pair always. Do two apples make a pear?

IF bank officials seem to be going it pretty fast, depositors have it in their power to draw a check on them.

"Br heavens! that stuff is not fit for a hog to eat!" remarked Smythe, as he pushed away his plate of beef stew at the Jarby boarding-house, the other day, at dinner. "All right; you needn't eat it, then, sir," spoke up Mrs. Jarby.

"I TELL you," said Poots, "there's an indescribable sense of luxury in lying in bed and ringing one's bell for one's valet." "You got a valet!" exclaimed Poots's friend. "No," replied Poots; "but I've got a bell!"

MILKMAN: "Johnny, did you put water in the milk this morning?" "Yes, sir." "Don't you know that is wicked, Johnny?" "But you told me to mix water with milk." "Yes, but I told you to put the water in first and pour the milk into it. Then, you see, we can tell people we never put water in our milk."

INDIGENT Young Man: "I would respectfully ask your daughter's hand in marriage, sir." Rich Father (in indignant surprise): "What! You want to marry my daughter?" Indigent Young Man (somewhat flurried): "Y-yes, sir. Why not? You don't know anything wrong with her, do you?"

INJUSTICE TO A CHILD.—Mamma (to Uncle James an old bachelor): "You don't know what a good boy Tommy has been to-day. He has not cried, nor teased his little sister, nor bothered the cook, nor—." Uncle James: "What's the matter with him? Is he sick?"

A MONSTROSITY.—Papa (soberly): "That was quite a monstrosity you had in the parlour last evening." Maud (nettled): "Indeed! That must depend upon one's understanding of the term 'monstrosity.'" Papa (thoughtfully): "Well, two heads upon one pair of shoulders, for example."

UNLUCKY JONES.—The price of real estate was under discussion at the club, when one gentleman remarked: "Jones, old boy, I know where you can buy just the nicest little home—splendid cottage, grand fruit trees, and all that—for a song." "Just my luck," said Jones. "I can't sing a note."

WHERE HE WAS.—"If you are innocent," said a lawyer to his client, an old darkey, who was charged with stealing a ham, "we ought to be able to prove an alibi. At what time was the ham stolen?" "Bout lebben o'clock, dey say." "Well, where were you between eleven o'clock and midnight—in bed?" "No, sir, I wah hidin' de ham."

"AND so it's a sore throat you've got, madam? And have ye ever had one before?" "Oh, yes, often." "And what did ye do for it?" "Oh, sometimes one thing and sometimes another." "And did ye get rid of it that way?" "Oh, yes." "Then I'd just advise ye to do what ye've always done, and maybe you'll get rid of it again."

A young man dressed in the height of fashion was driving along a country road, and, upon gazing at a pond which skirted the highway, said, "Oh! how I should like to lave my heated head in those cooling waters!" An Irishman, overhearing this, said, "Bedad and you might lave it there and it wouldn't sink!"

SOCIETY.

HER MAJESTY was fully expected at the Albert Hall on the morning of the 26th inst., when Gounod's *Mors et Vita* was to be given. The opportunity has been seized to buy up the seats commanding a good view of the Royal box. The Royal party occupying the *loge* on this occasion will be a large one, and will probably include Princess Beatrice and her husband, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, and the Duchess of Albany.

PRINCE CHRISTIAN has promised to preside at the 41st anniversary dinner of the German Hospital, which will take place at the Freemasons' Tavern on the 5th of May.

THE apartments in Hampton Court Palace which became vacant by the death of Lady Barnard have been given by the Queen to Mrs. Brook, the widow of General Brook, who was killed in the Afghan war.

ONE of the Empress Eugénie's diamonds has found its way into a necklace of magnificent workmanship, possessed by the Gaekwar of Baroda. It occupies the place of honour in the centre, and was purchased of the Empress for nine lakhs.

THE King and Queen of Sweden gave a magnificent ball at the Castle of Stockholm on the occasion of his Majesty's birthday, when about 2,000 guests were present.

THE Queen wore a splendid robe of red and gold brocade, trimmed with rich old Flemish lace, with a diadem and necklace of diamonds, and various orders. The Crown Princess's dress was of gold brocade and turquoise blue satin, trimmed with wild roses and diamonds; a splendid tiara of sapphires and diamonds, with necklace *en suite*. Besides several orders, her Royal Highness wore on the left shoulder the portrait of the Swedish King set in diamonds.

THE Danish Crown Princess was in pale green satin, embroidered with silver, and trimmed with rich lace, a diadem and necklace of pearls and diamonds, orders, and portraits of the Kings of Sweden and Denmark set in diamonds.

THE Earl of Airlie was presented a few nights ago at Cortachy Castle with a sword of honour and a piece of gold plate by his tenants and friends in the shires of Angus and Perth, whom he had invited to a supper and ball. A handsome secretaire of fine old French marqueterie was also presented to the Countess as a wedding gift.

AFTER the ceremony of presentation had been gone through the Earl and Countess led off the ball. The latter was dressed in pink satin, trimmed with lace, and yellow satin bodice and train; she also wore the diamond and pearl necklace given by the tenantry on her marriage, and the bracelet presented by the inhabitants of Aylth.

AN old corset of Charlotte Brontë's was sold the other day for eight shillings, a pair of scissors she had once handled for ten shillings, a print dress fetched fifteen shillings, and an ancient pair of boots worn by the famous authoress went for twenty-five shillings. After this, who shall say that hero worship is dying out?

A CHARMING wedding was that of José Evelyn, second daughter of Colonel Metcalf, which took place with Mr. H. Salmon at Aston Church. The bride's bodice and train were of ivory velours fringed over a skirt of Bengaline covered with Honiton lace, looped up with ostrich feathers.

THE dresses of the five bridesmaids were exceedingly brilliant, being composed of sapphire blue plush made with Louis Quinze coats, with full cravats, ruffles of old lace, the front of the skirts of ivory satin, and tulle veils over wreaths of lilies-of-the-valley. The bridegroom presented each young lady with a pearl and coral butterfly brooch.

AMONGST the sixteen ladies who recently passed the Oxford examination for women was Miss Mary Stuart Tait, daughter of the late Primate.

STATISTICS.

IT is computed that since 1793 wars among the civilised nations have caused the death of 4,470,000 men. A large majority of these deaths resulted from wounds, hardship and disease, the number actually killed on the field being comparatively small. The most sanguinary battle in the period named was Borodino, where 250,000 men were engaged, and 17,000 were placed *hors de combat*.

SAVINGS' BANKS are comparatively modern institutions, dating back from 1817, and originating in England. In fifteen European countries, with a present population of 192,000,000, the depositors in 1874, fifty-seven years from the beginning, were 12,000,000, with deposits amounting to £288,000,000. The progress made since 1874 is astonishing. Within the next four years the depositors had increased to 16,000,000, and the sum of savings had become £376,000,000.

GEMS.

AVOID railery; it offends him who is the object of it; he that indulges this humour is the scourge of society, and all fear and avoid him.

LET us seek liberty and peace under the law; and, following the pathway of our fathers, preserve the great legacy they have committed to our keeping.

PEOPLE are apt to pay you in the self-same coin you pass on them. If you give the gold of love you will get gold in return, and if you give the brass of impertinence you will get it back again before many days.

WHEN in reading we meet with any maxim that may be of use, we should take it for our own, and make an immediate application of it, as we would of the advice of a friend whom we have purposely consulted.

MODESTY in a man is never to be allowed as a good quality but a weakness, if it suppresses his virtue and hides it from the world, when he has at the same time a mind to exert himself.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

MINCED VEAL.—Cut, but do not chop, cold veal in small pieces; rub some butter and flower together to a cream, according to the quantity of your veal, and stir it into a sufficient quantity of boiling milk, also the grated rind of a lemon; let these boil together until the consistency of cream; sprinkle a little flour, salt and white pepper over the cut veal, and add it to the cream; stand it where it will keep up to the boiling point, but not boil; when thoroughly heated through squeeze the juice of a lemon over it, and serve quickly on bits of dry toast.

MACARONI PUDDING.—One ounce of macaroni, one pint of milk, two eggs, the juice of half a lemon and the peel grated, one ounce of butter, one ounce of sugar. Simmer the macaroni until it is tender in the milk. Beat the yolks of two eggs with the sugar and the butter, add the lemon juice and the grated peel; stir these into the macaroni and milk. Beat the whites of the two eggs to a stiff froth, and stir them in also very lightly. Pour all these ingredients into a buttered pie-dish, and bake for half-an-hour.

MARMALADE PUDDING.—Five ounces of bread crumbs, four ounces of suet, two ounces of candied peel, one lemon, one egg, three tablespoonfuls of marmalade. Chop the suet very fine, shred the candied peel, grate the rind of the lemon; put these ingredients with the crumbs into a basin, and mix with them the marmalade and egg. Well grease a basin, turn in the mixture, cover with greased paper, and steam four hours.

MISCELLANEOUS.

PAIN itself is not without its alleviations. It may be violent and frequent, but it is seldom both violent and long-continued, and its pauses and intermissions become positive pleasures. It has the power of shedding a satisfaction over intervals of ease which I believe few enjoyments exceed.

AMONG well-bred people a mutual deference is affected; contempt of others disguised; authority closely concealed; attention given to each in his turn, and an easy stream of conversation maintained, without vehemence, without interruption, without eagerness for victory, and without any airs of superiority.

WE must accept the fact that, as most of us are not noble enough or spiritual enough to breathe forth a love that is eternal in itself, requiring no other sustenance than its own life affords, so we must either nourish and cherish the love we do feel or submit to see it fade away. This illusion is not to matrimonial affection in any exclusive sense. That of course demands even a more vigilant care than any other to strengthen as life goes on. But it is desired here to emphasise what is seldom insisted on—viz: the sacredness of all love—that of parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and associates, as well as that of nearer and dearer ties.

CULTIVATION OF POPPIES.—The cultivation of the poppy in China, which has been more than once prohibited by imperial edicts, appears to be increasing everywhere, and becoming a profitable trade. In Szechuen, where the climate is warm and the season early, two crops at least are produced on the same ground annually. The seed of the poppy is sown in February, the plants flower in April, and the fruits are so matured by the middle of May that the juice is collected, and the stalks removed and burnt directly after, but previous to this the second crop, which may be either Indian corn, cotton, or tobacco, is sown, so that almost by the time the poppy is cleared from the field the new crop makes its appearance. The profit derived from the cultivation of the poppy is not only the result of a fair market value and a ready sale, but also from the fact that much of the work of the plantation, especially the gathering of the juice, can be done by the children of the family. The scratchings or incision being made in the capsules in the morning, the juice which has oozed out in the course of the day is collected in the evening, and after simply exposing it to the sun for a few days, the seed not required for sowing is used for food.

ORIGIN OF CHARACTER.—"Nothing in this life to me," said Professor Huxley, "is sadder than the fact that a man, watching the development of his children, is doomed to see his own peculiarities, his own faults—the things which he condemns in himself—cropping out in them. They may have his good traits, too. But nothing that he can do will prevent those old faults coming out in them. That illustrates the immutability of law. Children inherit certain traits and capabilities. They must go on and develop them. There is nothing more. They are bound by the elements which are born in them. A particular man receives a blow on the head, you see. Now perhaps he recovers from that blow; he is apparently perfectly well; but the effect of the blow continues. A son is born to the man. What has become of the energy expended in that blow upon the man's head? It is bound to continue. You cannot get rid of that. The persistence of force makes it inevitable. Perhaps the man's son gets along all right, and perhaps he doesn't. But suppose that the son, or the son's son, turns out to be a forger, or a criminal of some sort—possibly a murderer. How do we know that this is not the result of the original blow on the head, producing a slight accidental impression on the brain, the force of which takes the form of moral perversion in the offspring?"

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LILY S.—Declined with thanks.

COLEBA.—Fair, but hardly up to the standard.

INQUIRER.—Any good bookseller could obtain it for you.

FLORA MYRTLE.—The ballads may be obtained from any newsagent.

A. W.—1. A divorce could not be obtained, only a judicial separation. 2. No.

TOTTY.—One lock is golden brown; the other the very darkest shade of brown.

R. F.—Mr. Disraeli's ministry began on Feb. 27, 1868. Mr. Gladstone's on Dec. 9 of the same year.

A. B. C.—You are probably alluding to the famous picture on the subject. It is purely fanciful.

K. G. (Relgate).—1. Old Parr was alleged to be 152 years old when he died in 1655. 2. We should say not.

CHARLES C.—Several remedies have been proposed, but none are effectual.

JOHN N.—1. Apply to the War Office. Such a record is kept. 2. We cannot oblige you.

ALICE B.—A decree of nullity of marriage can be at once obtained if the facts are as stated.

W. J. R.—1. Apply at the Patent Office, Southampton-buildings. 2. We regret we have not got the receipt.

LADY OF THE LAKE.—1. They can only be removed by a surgical operation. 2. Treat him with silent contempt. 3. Not unless engaged.

VIOLET.—She must watch him narrowly when in her own company and in that of other girls. Her woman's wit will soon teach her to discover the truth.

A LOVER OF THE READER.—The long straight lines mean that the letter is to be pronounced in a broad open manner; the curves that it is short or narrowly pronounced.

"WOOD."—It would be most imprudent. The young lady should certainly not encourage him. She will not be able to marry again till her husband dies, or she obtains a divorce.

A. B. C.—The following is a good baking powder: Carbonate of soda two pounds, tartaric acid one pound, potato flour four pounds, turmeric powder half ounce. Mix and use as required.

E. M. F.—Stamping powder may be procured from any dealer in stamping materials. The manufacture of this powder is a secret, guarded with the greatest care by those possessing it.

K. T. P.—Unless the lady is a relative or a very intimate friend, it is not considered proper for a gentleman to send her presents of any kind. Your handwriting is very neat and plain.

C. R. H.—She has shown you very plainly that no other man has a claim upon her love, and your treatment of her is shameful and unwarranted. Try to conquer the detestable feeling of jealousy, and your future life will be much happier.

M. M. B.—Photographs are proverbially deceptive, but we should judge Flo to be the youngest; she has a nice quiet expression. Nellie would perhaps come next. She has good features and a pleasant look. Fizzie looks the eldest, and has a round comely face and a bright expression.

SPRING.—1. To clean alabaster, take two ounces of aquafortis, and add a pint of cold filtered water. Apply carefully with a brush, and rinse with cold water; then leave in the sun to dry. 2. The 5th of Sept., 1867, came on a Thursday. 3 and 4. We regret we are unable to give you an answer.

UNKNOWN.—1. We do not know, but presume to the subscribers who paid for its erection. 2. The 3rd of Jan., 1876, came on a Monday. 3. For a good sponge cake, take equal weights of eggs and sugar, half the weight of sifted flour; to twelve eggs add the rind of three lemons and juice of two, and so in proportion; beat the eggs carefully, white and yolks separately, before used. Stir thoroughly, and bake in a quick oven.

G. R. C.—A solution of bichloride of tin, sufficiently diluted, followed by a fixing mixture, or mordant, of sulphide of ammonia, gives a rich, golden-yellow tint to very light hair, and a golden-brown to darker hair, owing to the formation of bisulphide of tin. It is very evident that any substance of this kind, when applied to the hair, will be sure, sooner or later, to injure its roots, and thus lead to its ultimate destruction. Consequently, even though you wish to follow out some foolish whim or conform with some outlandish fashion, we would advise you to "let well enough alone," and rest satisfied with hair of the colour the Creator has given it.

R. H. H.—Good treacle candy is made by dissolving one cup of sugar in half a cup of vinegar, mixing it with one quart of treacle, and boiling, with frequent stirring, until a little of it, dropped from a spoon, into cold water, hardens. Then have a teaspoonful of carbonate of soda dissolved in a little hot water, and stir this in, together with a lump of butter the size of an egg; flavour to taste, give one hard final stir, and either "pull" into sticks, or pour on buttered paper or dishes for toffy. Sugar candy is easily made by boiling, without stirring, six cups of sugar, one cup of vinegar, and

one cup of water, until the mixture crimps in cold water. Then stir in a tablespoonful of butter and a teaspoonful of carbonate of soda dissolved in hot water, and "pull," as the candy cooks, till it is white. High authority on housekeeping says: "Since children must eat candy, this is the best you can give them. It is very nice. We add the advice, to experiment on small quantities of the material at first, and if not quite successful, to try again.

H. R. A.—Shaking, whether on rollers or steel, is a most healthful exercise, provided it is indulged in with moderation. Of course, where one takes exercises of any kind in the open air, the beneficial effect upon the system far exceeds that gained within doors, where the atmosphere is vitiated in various ways.

T. F. G.—1. The population of Stuttgart, Germany, according to the census of 1880, is 117,803. 2. You deserve great praise for so quickly mastering the English language, as evidenced in the composition of your note. Remarkably pretty penmanship; far above the average.

S. H. C.—The "rye" mentioned in Burns' ballad, "Comin' Thro' the Rye," is a small stream in Scotland, which is at one point crossed by stepping-stones. The lassies when crossing this stream were obliged to lift their dresses, and the laddies, taking advantage of the fact that both hands were thus engaged, snatched kisses from them.

H. H. T.—The question of the propriety of the marriages of first cousins is a very delicate one. We do not care to discuss it in its various phases. Persons contemplating such marriages should make themselves thoroughly acquainted with physiology and the laws of consanguinity before taking the step. In this way they can ascertain the principal reasons why such unions are imprudent and often unhappy.

LOVE'S WAITING.

I thought, alas, how long!
The hours go slowly on their way,
A sad and sombre throng,
Like mourners at the close of day!

The solemn sea, asleep,
Seemed through the weary night to moan,
And in its bosom kept
An unrest, sobbing like my own.

But hark! his footsteps come at last;
That bring the welcome form to me;
No more, faint heart, be dumb,
All doubts and fears for these are past.

And so, what care I now
For sighing hours or hidden moon,
Or absent stars, or how
The sea with self holds sad commune?

Since he is come again,
With sweet and loyal love to be—
Where other springs were vain
The source of happiness for me!

D. B. W.

B. D. W.—Doubtless your claim belongs to the same category as that of the "Aneke Jans Estate," the "Jennens Heirs," and others which have been in the hands of lawyers for years, and will in all probability remain there for many more, before the claimants will see that their chances to gain enormous fortunes are hopeless.

F. C. B.—The "rule of three" is the technical term for that rule in arithmetic, otherwise called proportion, which teaches the finding of a fourth number proportional to three given numbers. The term has been in use from the commencement of the sixteenth century, and from the great utility of the operation in commercial transactions, it received, almost from the commencement, the name of the "Golden Rule."

G. G. C.—1. To make a first-class liquid blacking or dressing for shoes and boots, take 1 quart of common vinegar, 6 ounces each of ivory-black and treacle, and 1½ ounces each of vitriol and spermaceti. Mix the vitriol and spermaceti first, afterwards add the other ingredients. If, when it is used, it does not dry quickly enough on the leather, add more of the vitriol, a little at a time, until it dries quickly enough. When there is too much of the vitriol, which varies in its strength, the mixture will give it a brown colour. 2. Ure's "Dictionary of Arts and Sciences," and Dick's "Encyclopedia of Receipts and Processes," contains accurate information applicable to almost every possible industrial and domestic requirement. These may be procured at any first-class booksellers. If not in stock get a dealer to order them from the publishers.

C. F. W.—The instrument of decapitation that figured so prominently in the famous French Revolution (1789-1794) was named the guillotine, after its supposed inventor, Joseph Ignace Guillotin, a physician, who was born in 1738, and died in 1814. Subsequent researches have developed the fact that instead of being the inventor, he was only the person who first proposed its adoption in France. It is composed of two upright posts, grooved on the inside and connected at the top by a cross beam. In these grooves a sharp blade, placed obliquely, descends by its own weight on the neck of the victim, who is bound to a board below. The invention of machines of this kind is ascribed to the Persians, and in Italy, during the thirteenth century, the nobles were accorded the privilege of suffering death by means of a similar instrument. An article re-

sembling the guillotine was likewise employed in Germany during the middle ages. During the sixteenth, and until 1775 in the seventeenth century, a machine called the "Maiden," which differed but slightly from the guillotine, was employed in Scotland for the purpose of beheading criminals and other offenders. That such an apparatus was known and tried in France prior to the Revolution is proved by the execution of the Duc de Montmorency, who is described as having been despatched by a falling axe at Toulouse in 1632.

C. R. L.—1. The following acrostic will, we hope, prove acceptable to "Joie":

"Joined to a piercing eye, perception keen—
Of modest manner, yet of noble men—
Sweet without flattery, proud without pretence—
Inimitable wit and rare good sense,
Excelling in her heart's munificence."

2. Considerably above the average.

G. N.—Perhaps the trouble experienced with the tone of the violin is due to the fact that it is not tuned to the concert pitch. This can be remedied by the use of an A tuning-pipe or a tuning-fork, procurable at any music-sellers. If the faulty tone is caused by some defect in the instrument itself, it should be taken to an expert repairer and thoroughly overhauled. We could not recommend any such person to your notice, as business addresses are always debarré from this column.

P. C. M.—When a gentleman is on very intimate terms with a lady, and desires her company to the theatre, a concert or an evening party, it is not obligatory upon him to send her an invitation couched in the stiff, formal words required by strict etiquette, but he may write it in a plain manner, stating that he would feel highly honoured with her company, etc. Note paper or gilt-edge invitation cards are generally used, there being but little choice between the two.

D. D. F.—The Jews and Seventh-Day Baptists observe Saturday as the Sabbath, while other denominations observe the first day or Sunday of each week as the Sabbath. The first record of the observance of the seventh day by the Jews is mentioned in Exodus xvi. 23-25, when, in addition to its being observed in remembrance of the original rest day of the creation, it was celebrated also in memory of the day of freedom of the Jews from Egyptian bondage. The exact date of the substitution by the Christians of the first day for the seventh, as the day for the proper observance of the Sabbath, is unknown. At first they observed both the first and the seventh.

C. F. F.—The proper form of introduction is to present the gentleman to the lady, the younger to the older, the inferior to the superior. Thus you will say: "Miss Buxton, allow me to present to you Mr. Reede." "Mrs. Warden, let me present to you my friend, Miss Wendell." "General Gill, permit me to introduce to you Mr. Lawrence." The exact words used in introductions are immaterial, so that the proper order is preserved. Thus, in introducing two gentlemen, it is sufficient to say, "Mr. James, Mr. Perkins." If several persons are to be presented to one individual, mention the name of the latter first, and then call the others in succession, bowing slightly as each name is pronounced.

C. M. M.—1. Accidents in coal mines have for years been of frequent occurrence, especially in this country. In 1858 52 persons perished at Bardsley; 20 at Duffryn, near Newport; 52 at Tydesley, near Leeds; and about 36 in different parts of the country. On April 5, 1859, 20 lives were lost at the chain colliery, near Neath, through the irruption of water. In 1860 the fatality at Barracrow, near Killingworth, was 70; at the Risco mine, near Newport, 145; and at the Helton mine, Northumberland, 23. In 1861 the fatal casualties in Derbyshire were 21; in 1863, at various mines, 132; in 1865, 66. Among the most terrible accidents may be mentioned the one at Lund Hill, in South Yorkshire. While the miners were dining in the pit, Feb. 19, 1867, the inflammable gas took fire and exploded. Over 130 miners perished. In April and May bodies were still being extricated. At the Hartley coal mine in Northumberland, Jan. 16, 1862, one of the beams at the mouth of the ventilating shaft broke, and a mass of iron weighing twelve tons fell down the shaft, destroying the walls of separation, and burying alive 202 persons, men and boys. This list could be greatly extended; but it will be sufficient to state that from 1864 to 1874 inclusive, about 11,000 deaths by accident took place in England and Wales; a very large proportion of them from coal mine casualties.

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